

North Summit Church
Hebrews 1:1-4
God's Final Word

Introduction

New Sermon Series:
Hebrews: Encountering the Supremacy of Christ.

READ: Hebrews 1:1-4

Historical Context

The Book of Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians facing intense pressure to abandon their faith and return to Judaism. Written likely between 60-70 AD, the community was experiencing persecution, economic hardship, and social ostracism. The author (whose identity remains unknown) writes to encourage perseverance and demonstrate Christ's superiority over the old covenant system.

- It's important for us to remember that the early church was almost entirely Jewish, and while the gospel was going to the nations, this mission to the gentiles had only just begun.

Literary Structure & The Five Warning Passages

Hebrews follows a sophisticated pattern built around five warning passages that create natural divisions in the author's argument:

- **Warning #1 (2:1-4): Don't drift away from the message**
- **Warning #2 (3:7-4:11): Don't harden your heart in unbelief**
- **Warning #3 (5:11-6:8): Don't remain spiritually immature**
- **Warning #4 (10:26-31): Don't deliberately reject Christ's sacrifice**
- **Warning #5 (12:25-29): Don't refuse God's voice**

Each section follows the pattern:

Theological Exposition → Warning → Encouragement/Application

Major Themes

- **Christ's Superiority - Over angels, Moses, Joshua, and the Levitical priesthood**
- **The New Covenant - Fulfillment and replacement of the old system**
- **Faith and Perseverance - Endurance through trials and opposition**

- **Worship and Access - Bold approach to God through Christ**
- **Pilgrimage Motif - Journey toward the heavenly city**

Framework

- Rather than systematic theology, Hebrews presents pastoral theology - truth applied to life situations.
- The author consistently moves from doctrine to duty, from theology to biography, from creed to conduct.

Why Hebrews...Now

- We live in the age of information overload.
- The average person encounters over 5,000 advertisements per day. We receive hundreds of notifications on our phones.
- Social media algorithms compete for our attention.
- News cycles demand our emotional investment every few hours.
- Podcasts, blogs, influencers, and experts all claim to have the answers we need.
- **In this echo chamber of competing voices, how do we know which voice to trust?**
- **How do we distinguish truth from opinion, wisdom from noise, divine revelation from human speculation?**
- The writer of Hebrews understood this challenge. He was writing to Jewish Christians who were hearing competing voices: some saying they should return to Judaism, others questioning whether Jesus was really superior to what they had known before.
- So right here in the opening words of this very pastoral and personal letter, the author cuts through all the noise reminding his audience about God's final word in the person and work of Christ.

In a world of competing voices, we must anchor ourselves to God's ultimate revelation in Jesus.

Let's examine how the author makes this case in our passage today as he sets up this very pastoral and theologically rich sermon.

God Has Always Been Speaking

"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..."

- The first thing we must understand is that God is a communicating God. He has never been silent.
- From the very beginning, when He spoke creation into existence with "Let there be light," God has been revealing Himself to humanity.
- The author describes this historical revelation with two key phrases: "at many times and in many ways." The Greek words here suggest something given incrementally and in diverse forms.

God spoke through:

- Direct encounters with patriarchs like Abraham and Moses
- Dramatic theophanies like the burning bush and Mount Sinai
- Prophetic visions and dreams
- Historical events that revealed His character
- Poetry, wisdom literature, and narratives
- The still, small voice that Elijah heard
- **But here's what we must not miss:** This revelation, though genuine and true, was incomplete. It was like receiving pieces of a magnificent puzzle over centuries. Each piece was authentic, but none gave you the complete picture. They were all pointing to the moment in human history when God would reveal Himself completely through Jesus.
- Until Jesus we didn't have the full revelation, the picture on the Puzzle box that shows us where all the pieces go.
- Many times we approach God this way even today. We collect scattered impressions - a verse here, a sermon there, a feeling during worship, advice from a friend - but we never allow God's complete revelation to shape our understanding of who He is.
- The danger is that we create a version of God that fits our preferences rather than discovering who He actually is. We emphasize the pieces we like and downplay the ones that challenge us.

- Jesus is the full revelation, Paul talks about this as the mystery that was hidden in ages past, but now in Christ the fullness of revelation has come.

God's Final Word Has Come

"...whom he appointed 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."

- The contrast here is stunning. Where the Old Testament revelation was fragmentary, Christ's revelation is complete. Where it was incremental, Christ is final. Where it came through various means, Christ is the means.
- Notice the extraordinary claims made about this Son:
 - **He is the heir of all things.** This doesn't mean God is retiring and Jesus is taking over the family business. Rather, it speaks of shared authority and co-possession. Jesus isn't God's successor; He's God's equal partner in ruling all creation.
 - **He is the agent of creation.** John 1:3 tells us that "all things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." Colossians 1:16 declares that "by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible." This Son didn't just show up in Bethlehem - He's been active from the beginning.
 - **He is the radiance of God's glory.** The word used here appears only one other time in ancient literature - in the Wisdom of Solomon, describing divine wisdom as the reflection of eternal light. This isn't just a bright reflection; this is the very brilliance of God Himself made visible.
 - **He is the exact imprint of God's nature.** The Greek word here translated imprint is like a seal pressed into wax, creating an exact reproduction. Jesus isn't similar to God or representative of God - He is the precise expression of God's very essence.
 - **He upholds the universe by the word of His power.** This isn't passive maintenance but active sustaining. Every atom continues to exist because Christ continues to speak it into being. The same Word that created the universe continues to actively sustain all things into being.

What does this mean for us practically?

- **Jesus is God's final word.** He's not God's preliminary statement or rough draft. He's not even God's best attempt at communication. He is God's complete, perfect, final revelation of Himself.
- When people ask, "What is God like?" we don't point them to our feelings, our circumstances, or even our best understanding of Scripture taken in isolation. We point them to Jesus. As Jesus said in John 14:9, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."
- Scripture is scripture because it all points to Jesus, the fulfillment, the author, the perfector, the perfect representation of God to us.
- **This changes everything...for how we read the Bible, how we pray, and how we make decisions.**
- **When reading Scripture**, we read everything through the lens of Christ. The Old Testament points forward to Him; the New Testament flows from Him, and his people are his people because they represent and reflect him. He's not one character among many in the biblical story - He's the central character that gives meaning to every other part.
 - When we read David and Goliath, it's not primarily about how you can be brave like David, rather it is about the one who truly defeated the giants that can kill us - sin and death - and whose victory becomes ours?
 - When we understand this, we begin to see the trajectory of Scripture and how Christ fulfills what every passage points toward.
 - We see that Jesus is the true and better Adam who passed the test in a much tougher garden. He's the true and better Abraham who left everything familiar to venture into the unknown. He's the true and better Moses who mediates a new covenant. He's the true and better David whose victory becomes his people's victory, though we never lifted a stone ourselves.
 - When you begin to read the Bible this way, everything changes. Jesus becomes the true temple, the true sacrifice, the true priest, the true king, the true light. The Bible isn't about us and our performance - it's about Him and His perfect representation of everything that is true and good and beautiful in this world.
 - The Bible's trajectory always leads to Jesus.

- **When we pray**, we approach God with confidence because we know exactly what He's like. We don't have to guess at His character or wonder if He's in a good mood today. Jesus has shown us perfectly who God is.
- **When we make decisions**, we don't have to wonder what God wants. We ask, "What would Jesus do?" not as a simplistic slogan, but as theological truth. Jesus perfectly represents God's will and character.
 - Truth isn't something that we find within ourselves or within Creation, it comes to us from outside this world, as revealed to us in the incarnation.
 - Jesus has shown us what humanity looks like when it is in harmony with God.

And where the author is leading us is to the fact that...

Christ Demands Our Full Attention

"Having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs."

- The author concludes this opening section by establishing Christ's superiority to the angels - the messengers who delivered much of the Old Testament revelation. If we were required to pay attention to the messages delivered by angels, how much more should we attend to the message delivered by the Son Himself?
- This brings us to the crucial question: In a world full of competing voices, how do we prioritize God's voice in Christ?
- **First, we must create rhythms that prioritize God's voice over cultural noise.**
 - This isn't just about having a quiet time, though that's important. It's about structuring our lives so that we regularly encounter God's final word in Christ through Scripture, worship, prayer, and Christian community.
 - **Our Devoted Series was a preparation for this study through the Book of Hebrews.**
 - Consider your information diet. If you consume hours of news, social media, and entertainment but give minutes to God's Word, which voice is really shaping your worldview? We become like what we consume.

- **What are you consuming?** This is why communion has always been the central focus of Christian worship throughout since it was instituted by Christ Himself. He is the bread of life, he is the one we look to for our very sustenance.
- **Second, we must learn to identify and filter competing messages through the lens of Christ.**
 - Every day, we encounter messages about what will make us happy, successful, secure, or fulfilled. Marketing tells us what we need to buy. Culture tells us how to define ourselves. Politics tells us where to find hope. Social media tells us what's important.
 - The question becomes, do they align with what God has revealed about reality in the person of Christ.

Practical questions to ask:

- Does this message align with what Jesus taught about human flourishing?
- Does this promise offer what only God can provide?
- Does this value reflect God's character as revealed in Christ?
- Does this priority match what Jesus said was most important?
- **Third, we must build life decisions on Christ's supreme authority.**
 - Because Jesus is God's final word, His teaching carries ultimate authority.
 - This doesn't mean we ignore wisdom from other sources, but it means we filter everything through the supreme revelation God has given us.

This affects:

- **Career decisions:** What work honors God and serves others as Jesus taught?
- **Relationship choices:** How do we love others as Christ loved us?
- **Financial decisions:** How do we handle money in light of Jesus's teaching?
- **Time management:** How do we prioritize what Jesus said was most important?
- **Response to suffering:** How do we endure trials following Christ's example?
- **Finally, we put our faith, our confidence in God's complete revelation.**

- One of the greatest sources of anxiety in our culture is uncertainty.
- We don't know what tomorrow will bring. We can't predict how current events will unfold. We struggle with major decisions because we can't see the future.
- **But here's the truth:** We may not know everything about our circumstances, but we know everything we need to know about God's character and purposes. In Christ, God has revealed Himself completely. We don't need additional revelation or special insights. We have God's final word.

This gives us confidence to:

- Trust God's goodness even when life is difficult
- Follow God's commands even when they're countercultural
- Rest in God's love even when we feel unworthy
- Hope in God's promises even when they seem delayed
- ****This is also why we should be skeptical and test the spirit of those who are presenting something novel, or mysterious, or any kind of revelation that has been hidden.**

Conclusion

The writer of Hebrews began his letter with this magnificent declaration because his readers needed to understand something crucial: In Jesus Christ, God has spoken His final, complete, perfect word. Nothing needs to be added. Nothing can be improved. Nothing else is needed.

In our world of information overload and competing voices, this is both comforting and challenging. It's comforting because we don't have to keep searching for God's will - He's revealed it in Christ. It's challenging because we must choose daily whether to prioritize God's voice or the countless others clamoring for our attention.

Questions:

- What voices are competing for your attention this week?
- How will you create space to hear God's voice clearly?
- What decisions are you facing that need to be filtered through Christ's teaching?
- Where do you need to trust God's complete revelation rather than seeking additional certainty?

- **God has spoken His final word. The question is: Are we listening?**

Closing Prayer

Father, we thank You that You have not left us to guess about Your character or Your will. In Your Son Jesus Christ, You have spoken Your final, complete word. Help us this week to tune our hearts to His voice above all others. Give us wisdom to discern truth from noise, eternal significance from temporary distractions. May we build our lives on the solid foundation of Christ's supreme revelation rather than the shifting sands of cultural opinions. As we face decisions and challenges this week, help us remember that in Christ we have everything we need to know about who You are and what You desire for our lives. We pray this in the name of Jesus, Your final word to us. Amen.