

Hebrews 1:1-3

“Be Confident Of Christ”

We enter in today to one of the most insightful books in all of the bible with respect to the person and character of Christ; not only regarding who He *is* and what He’s *done*, but what He’s *doing presently* as our Great High Priest, the book of Hebrews.

It’s a letter that really in its essence calls us to consider Jesus very carefully as it shows us both the sufficiency and the superiority of Christ over really any and every aspect of Judaism. The author displays the superiority of Christ over the angels, over Moses, over Joshua, over the prophets, over the law, over the Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system. He *created* all things, He *sustains* all things, He’s *over* all things, and with regard to Moses, the prophets, the law, the priestly service, the sacrificial system, the author of Hebrews demonstrates and illustrates how that Jesus is the fulfillment of all of that which those things merely foreshadowed. and Though I’ll do my very best to exposit and explain this letter as we go through, there’s no false humility present when I tell you that I already know I won’t come close to doing it justice. It’s just one of those letters that cause us to want to take off our shoes as we walk through it because we know we’re treading on holy ground.

As for who the epistle is specifically targeted the name probably gives that away. It was written specifically to Jewish Christians who were living right in that transition time whereby 2 worlds were colliding. Everything a Jewish individual had ever known or had been instructed in regarding drawing close *to* God or being pleasing in the sight *of* God had culminated in Christ. For centuries they’d been commanded to observe certain rites, certain feast days, certain sacrifices in order that they might be clean, found acceptable before God. Now Christ had come, He’d fulfilled all of that which those things foreshadowed. There was no more need for sacrifices, the Levitical system had found its fulfillment, didn’t need to observe certain days, or certain foods. As a matter of fact as it pertained to righteousness before God, that which was commanded them *by* God had now become sin *before* God. God had *commanded* certain sacrifices of them, but now they could rest in the sacrifice of Christ. So if you were to now look to the sacrifice of a bull, or a lamb, or a goat in order to make a covering for your sin, it was to spit upon the cross and deem the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as insufficient.

Now, having said that they were living in that time whereby (like today) not everyone received Christ. There were many Jews still dogmatically observing the rites and the rituals commanded by Moses. and If you as a Jew came to Christ, but your family wasn’t believers, as far as they were concerned you’d blasphemed against God, had turned your back on Him, His law, everything He’d commanded of you and you were disowned by your family. You lost everything, you were reduced literally to nothing, you were cut off from the temple or any formal place of worship, you couldn’t buy, or sell, no one would do business with you, add to that the pressure of persecution, your responsibility to try and provide for your immediate family, and you can see it was tough times to live in. There were people saying, “Man, it’d be easier to simply go back to Judaism, what’s a sacrifice here and there going to hurt if it’ll ease all this suffering, if it’ll help me provide for my wife and children.”

So the author of Hebrews is writing to them saying, “Don’t draw back, press on, look *to* and trust *in* Jesus, He is sufficient, He is superior, you gain *way more* (more than words can say) in Christ than you ever lost in Judaism.” and He warns them of the danger of drawing back, and encourages them to realize the reality of the character of Christ.

But don’t let that in anyway cause you to think that since it was written with a Jewish believer in mind that it’s not powerful, profound, and personable to you or me as a Gentile believer. God’s got a message for us in this letter and we don’t want to miss it.

Who wrote the book of Hebrews? The debate rages on, some say it was Barnabas, because he was a Levite and would’ve had a very strong insight regarding the priesthood, the Levitical rites and rituals, others say Apollos because he’s a noted eloquent Greek orator, and it’s obvious that whoever wrote Hebrews had a working knowledge and command of the Greek language that’s 2nd to none. Some say it was Dr. Luke, I’m personally of the persuasion that it was Paul, and there are numerous reasons I’m of that persuasion, I believe he leaves his fingerprints all throughout this letter. From the reference to his chains (in typical Pauline fashion), his mention of his relationship to Timothy, the way the letter closes is typical to Paul and no other NT writer.

Every letter Paul wrote he closed with a salutation or a gesture of grace toward the reader. **Rom 16:24**, “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*” **1 Cor 16:23** “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*” **2 Cor 13:14** “*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.*” **Gal 6:18** “*Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*” **Eph 6:24** “*Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.*” **Phil 4:23** “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*” **Col 4:18** “*Grace be with you. Amen.*” **1 Thess 5:28** “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.*” **2 Thess 3:18** “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*” 1 Tim 6:21 “*Grace be with you. Amen.*” **2 Tim 4:22** “*Grace be with you. Amen.*” **Titus 3:15** “*Grace be with you all. Amen.*” **Philem 25** “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*” Hmmm, I’m sensing a pattern here. Now, when we get to the end of the book of Heb I’ll give you one guess as to how you suppose it draws to a close... “*Grace be with you all. Amen.*” **Heb 13:25** So to me it seems that Paul was the guy, having said that there are some incredibly scholarly individuals who would chew me up and spit me out who would say there’s no way. Can I say it really doesn’t matter who penned the letter, because the fact of the matter is the Holy Spirit is the author of this book just the same as He is all of the scriptures. The human instrument is irrelevant.

As for when it was written more than likely it was written in the mid-late 60’s A.D. Timothy was still alive, and it would seem apparent that since the sacrificial rites were still being performed by the non-believing Jews that it was written before 70 A.D. when the temple was destroyed by the Romans.

So now that we're vaguely acclimated to the book, it's aim, it's target audience, it's author (being the Holy Spirit), let's just dive headlong into this wonderful letter.

Vs1-3

The rest of the book will basically be an exposition on what we might consider the outline of these 1st few Vs. These 1st few Vs are the short of it, the rest of the book taking the time to expound on these truths.

I don't know how you could begin a letter anymore powerfully, or in any way more captivately so as to engage your reader than this right here, "God." I mean, how much is contained in even that single word, "God." All knowing, all powerful, in all places at all times; and much like the book of Genesis and the gospel of John there are a couple of different assumptions made right off the bat. The 1st assumption is that God exists. Nowhere in the bible is there ever an attempt to prove there is a God, it's simply assumed. After all in reality the bible is God's autobiography, and I've yet to meet a person who wrote a book that started with a premise of seeking to prove his existence. By the very fact that they're writing a book they exist. Creation itself speaks to man of a Creator.

There are all kinds of fingerprints that God has placed all around us that point *to* and speak *of* His reality, but nowhere in the bible is there an effort to prove God's existence. It's simply assumed He does exist. As a matter of fact we read, "*The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'*" Ps 14:1 There are those who feel as though they need to make a case in order to prove God's existence and I suppose if that's what they feel led to do then more power to them. But God's never felt the need to prove to *anyone* that He's there, probably because all of mankind *knows* He's there, it's just that not everyone is honest enough to admit it. They want to be real intellectual, rationalize and theorize Him out of existence, explain Him away. Well, you can explain all you like, the fact is He's there. The book of Genesis begins, "*In the beginning God...*" Gen 1:1 The gospel of John begins, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*" John 1:1 Or more literally with regard to that last phrase, "and God was the Word." The reality of God is simply assumed, here we have the same thing, "God."

I'd have you note that God isn't an "it" God's not some mystical force to be tapped by those who are one with the universe in the circle of life. God is a person, we don't read "God, the mystical force," we read "God, who." When you reference a subject through the word "who" it means you're speaking of a person. Now I'm not saying God has 2 eyes, a nose, and a mouth, the bible is clear that God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. But the reason you're a person is because you've been created in His image, His likeness. What makes you a person is the fact that you have "personality." God can be grieved, you can be grieved, God can be angered, you can be angered, God can be pleased, and have joy, and He's placed all of the same capacity in you, you've been made in His likeness.

Now, as to where you and I generally pervert the emotions because of sin God's character is completely righteous. What I mean by that is that when you get jealous it's not generally holy, when you're angry it's not usually a righteous indignation, God's characteristics aren't tainted through sin, ours often times are. But God is a person.

The next thing that is assumed is that God "spoke;" that He has revealed Himself, communicated to man concerning Himself. "God, who at various times and in various ways *spoke*..." So God is there, and He has spoken to man, He hasn't simply sat by in *passive silence*, but has *actively spoken* to man. Now what is "speaking" it's a means whereby 2 people are able to communicate and relate to one another through mutual understanding. It's the primary arena in which we receive direction, correction, we receive insight, understanding, information, illumination and application through the medium of speaking. So God has at various times and in various ways in time past spoken to the fathers by the prophets. "The fathers" being those who make up the ancestry of the human race (primarily the nation of Israel is in view, but regarding Adam, Noah and a few others the Gentile nations are certainly included there). God has spoken to various people, at various times, in various ways in order to communicate and illustrate His heart, His ways, Himself to man.

When we read "at various times and in various ways," we're not really speaking about random intervention at random times. God spoke at various times in such a way as to give us a progressive revelation of Himself. In other words, outside of the fact that He walked and talked with Adam in the cool of the day, when Adam sinned God immediately began to speak to Adam, He revealed His heart to us through that in providing a sacrifice for him. He spoke to Noah and revealed a bit of who He is in that. He spoke to Ab, but He didn't give Ab the full picture, He added to it through Moses, and through Joshua, at another time He spoke to Samuel and David.

Later there was Jonah, and Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah, there was Daniel, and Malachi, so on and so forth, and He was revealing Himself, His will, His ways to us through them at various times and in various ways.

Now when it speaks of God speaking in various ways it's not really referencing the fact that He spoke *to the prophets* in various ways (though He did). He spoke to prophets through dreams, visions, word of knowledge, some He spoke through the still small voice, He spoke to Hosea through his family crisis, how that even as his wife was unfaithful Israel was unfaithful to Him, He spoke to Moses through a burning bush. So God spoke *to* them in various ways, but the idea here is that God spoke to us *by* them in various ways. Some of those guys did some wild things in communicating God's message, Ezekiel had to do some seemingly insane sort of stuff in getting God's message across to the people. It wasn't uncommon for the prophets to do all sorts of things in the name of an object lesson from God. But beyond that even is the fact that they communicated God's message in various ways; as you read the OT you'll find historical narratives, poetry, prophecy, dramatic presentations, proverbs, parables...different ways through which the prophets communicated to the fathers the word of God.

Having said that something that is then brought into the light is another underscoring of the fact that the scriptures are God's Word, they're divinely inspired. Spoken *by* the prophets *to* the fathers, but it wasn't the word of the prophets, it was the infallible, inerrant word of *God spoken* to man, through man. Remember Peter said, "...*prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*" 2 Peter 1:21 and Of course perhaps one you're a little more familiar with, "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*" 2 Tim 3:16-17 So though the Word has come *through* the prophets, it was that which was given to them *by* God.

Even though it's been a revelation of who He is, it's still been fragmented, the big picture was hazy, difficult to grasp. It's been like the light of who God is has been given to us through a prism, so the ray of light has been fragmented, and each fragment is beautiful but it's incomplete in and of itself. and God had been revealing Himself in various ways, at various times through the prophets, but when the fullness of time had come God sent forth His Son, the culmination of His Self revelation has come to us in the person of His son. Notice (Vs 1-2a read)

We might understand it like this; "Jesus Christ is God's final word to man, apart from Christ He has nothing more to say." You take every one of those colored beams of light coming through that prism and harness them into the single bright white beam that composes them all in perfect harmony and that's the revelation of God in Christ. He is the culmination of God's personal revelation of Himself to man. What does that mean?

We'll touch on that in just a second but before we do I want you to notice something, 2 words in this 1st phrase of Vs 2 perhaps they jumped out at you, "last days." People occasionally ask the question, "Do you think we're living in the last days?" My answer is definitive and absolute, "Yes, with out question." How can I know that, because right here the bible qualifies the spectrum of time from the Messiah forward as the "last days." Since the time that Jesus came onto the scene we've been living in the last days. and *Each* day brings us closer to *that* day when Christ will return for His church, we're to watch and be ready. Perhaps you're thinking that a couple thousand yrs sure seems like a long time to qualify as the last days. But with God all of time is swallowed up in but a moment, He lives in the eternal, a day is as a thousand yrs and a thousand yrs is but a day.

So though there have been different periods of time whereby God dealt with man, there was an age before the law was given, then of course there was the age whereby man was under the law, now we're in the dispensation of grace, the age of the Gentiles. and This is the last time period prior to the return of Christ and the culmination of all things in Him, these days are the last days, there'll be no other period in human history whereby God relates to man on a different basis.

The final word spoken is by (or through) His Son. and It's not so much that Jesus *brought* the message, it's that Jesus *is* the message. He's the Living Word, (and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth). Perhaps you've wondered before what language God speaks, wonder know more, the language of God is "Son." He communicates His heart, His ways, His character through Jesus Christ and This is a huge key in your study of the Word of God because I think we can often misread inflections into it by drifting from this reality right here.

Adam sins, God comes on the scene, "Adam where are you?" Often times we read that and we think of a police officer searching out the guilty party, "Come out with your hands up!" In a harsh and judgmental tone, but if you look at the heart of Jesus toward sinners you could never read it that way. The Pharisees brought to Him the woman caught in the very act of adultery, "The law says we should stone her, what do you say." Long story short, "Let him who's with out sin cast the 1st stone." and 1 by 1 they all dropped their rocks and split, Jesus looked at her and says, "*Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?*" She said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said to her, '*Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.*'" John 8:10-11 Jesus didn't come to condemn the world, but that the world *through Him* might be saved. Now how can you look at a passage like Genesis Ch 3 through the lens of John Ch 8 seeing the compassion and healing touch of Jesus and think that the Father was in any way condescending, harsh, or condemning toward Adam?

You see we don't interpret Christ through the scriptures, it's the scriptures that are interpreted *through Christ*. Remember He said, "You've heard it said you shall not commit murder, I say to you if you're even angry at your brother with out cause you're in danger of judgment." "You've heard it said you shall not commit adultery, but I say to you that if you even look on a woman to lust after her in your heart you've committed adultery already in your heart." Jesus gave us God's heart regarding God's word. God has spoken to us, communicated the revelation of Himself to us through His Son. Remember when Jesus took Peter, James and John up on the Mt and was transfigured before them and was speaking with Moses and Elijah. and Peter was freaking out and didn't know what to say, so he said, "Teacher it's good to be here let's make 3 tabernacles, 1 for You, 1 for Moses, and 1 for Elijah." and We read, "*While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'*" Matt 17:5 and The idea there is that you have a representation of the law in Moses and the prophets in Elijah, but the culmination of those things, their fulfillment is in Christ, "Hear Him!" He's greater than both those things put together, God has spoken to us by His Son.

Jesus is superior to the law, He's superior to the prophets, and now the writer of the book of Hebrews list out a 7 fold description or demonstrates for us in a 7 fold way the superiority of Christ (really) over all, there are none who compare, you can have *confidence* in the superiority of Christ. God has shown that He is completely satisfied with the whole of who He *is* and what He's *done* by raising Him from the dead. How is Christ superior? #1 He's the heir of all things, check it out, "...whom He (that is the Father) has appointed heir of all things."

Now we realize that all things were made through Him and with out Him nothing was made that was made. Yet when He created Adam He gave to Adam dominion over the earth, but Adam lost that dominion through the fall. When God became a Man in the Person of Jesus Christ He recovered that which Adam had lost, and has been appointed the heir of all things. The bible teaches that He gave everything He had to pay the purchase price for the title deed to this earth, not because He wanted the earth, but because He wanted to extract the treasure out of it, what's the treasure? You are. Jesus gave all that He had that He might redeem you. That ought to tell you something of the value of your soul in the eyes of God. So many people feel as though they're worthless, God was willing to give everything He had for you, He loves you, places a premium upon you that's beyond the ability of the wealth of this world to compensate for. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. You see not only are you an heir *of* Him, the bible teaches that we're joint heirs *with* Him, let that rock your world for a while. All that His obedience has gained Him He'll share with you. Jesus is superior in that He's the heir of all things.

#2 He's superior in that it was through Him that God made the worlds. Now we touched on this when we spoke of all things being made through Him and with out Him nothing was made that was made, we realize that God made *everything* through Christ. But when this says, "He made the worlds," more literally that should be translated, "He made the ages." Remember when Paul was preaching there in Acts 17 and he said, "*And He (speaking of God) has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being,*" Acts 17:26-28 That's what this is speaking of, that He made the ages, the time periods in which we live, Christ has ordained the flow of history, it's literally "His story." There is an order, and a flow to creation and the ages and Jesus has ordained, formed, and fashioned it all.

#3 He's superior in that He is the very brightness of God's glory (Vs 3). He's the very outshining of the glory of God, you can't see the sun, but you see the outshining of it, you receive the effects of it through it's radiance, it's brilliance, be it light, heat, healing. In the same way no one has ever seen the Father, but the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him, He's the outshining of Him.

#4 He's superior in that He is the express image of the Father's person, #5 He's superior in that he upholds *all* things by the word of His power, #6 Christ is superior in that He has by Himself purged our sins, and #7 Jesus is superior in that He has sat down at the right hand of Majesty on High. I don't really want to tap in to these things right now because I feel as though we'd be rushed and I don't really want to rush through them.

Suffice it to say that what's being declared here is an airtight case for the sufficiency and superiority of Jesus Christ. You can be confident in Him and in His work upon the cross for you. He is sufficient to forgive your sin, His righteousness is sufficient for you before the Father, and He is superior to any other attempt that man might seek to place beside Him as to what it takes to be acceptable to God. There is no power above or even beside Him, He *alone* purged our sins, therefore He alone is sufficient to save us. Jesus is the way, He's the truth and He's the life and no one comes to the Father except through Him. Don't draw back, move forward, you can be confident in the sufficiency and the superiority of Christ on your behalf.

Prayer Points:

God we thank You for making it so clear, for increasing our faith, our confidence in Christ. May we not be those who draw back to perdition but believe to the saving of the soul. Move us on to maturity as we study this book, this letter to the Hebrews. We know You have so much for us, give us ears to hear.

If you're here and you've not placed your confidence in Christ, you haven't believed upon Him to the saving of your soul, I want to invite you to do that today. You can trust in the Lord, He's more than sufficient for your every need and He wants to meet your greatest need, your need for Him and His saving grace lavished upon you and He wants to meet that need right here, right now, will you let Him? If He's dealing with you, if you're sensing His drawing you to Himself, calling you to follow Him, to surrender your life to Him, open your heart, repent of your sin and ask Him in.