“Book of Hebrews – Chapter 1”

God’s Final Word: JESUS!!

[ Series Title ~ ‘In Christ Alone - Towards spiritual maturity!’ ]

Or

[ Jesus … Simply The Best! ]

9.30a.m. Sunday 26 February, 2017

Delivered by Senior Pastor Marshall Muller @ the Laidley Baptist Church (Qld).

Introduction:
Did everyone manage to get their homework done this week - reading the first Chapter of Hebrews (just 14 verses)?

Well, if you didn't get a chance, we’re going to read it together anyway this morning.

But just before we do, a brief summary of last week. Last week was an introduction to Hebrews. We talked about the Who/What/Where/When/Why of Hebrews. This is important as we try to understand God’s Word.

We also had a quick exercise in rightly dividing God’s word of Truth when we looked at what was the correct day to worship – Saturday or Sunday. That was interesting, but it shows us how important it is to know God’s Word completely.

If you missed last week and would like to catch up, you can download the notes from the Laidley Baptist Church website.

Get your Bibles out. We’re going to read Hebrews Chapter 1 together …

Let’s pray …

Gracious God & our Heavenly Father, open your Word of Truth to us afresh today. Teach us, disciple us, instruct us to be the people you have called us to be. Thank you for speaking to us in these last days through your Son, Jesus. Help us each one to listen to His voice today. Amen
The Work & Person of the Son (Jesus)

AT our weekly prayer meeting someone started their prayer with, ‘It’s all about you Jesus!’. I loved that!

The Book of Hebrews reiterates that theme of ‘It’s all about you Jesus!’. Today as we look at Chapter 1 we will see that it is all about Jesus!

Let me ask you a question? How does God speak to mankind? (How does He speak to you?) How has God revealed Himself & His will down through the ages?

In verse 1, we have the statement ‘God spoke’. It is taken for granted that God speaks. It is useless to read any further if God does not speak to mankind. Another thing to be reminded of is that what God spoke in the past has a bearing in the future. God’s revelations are all connected. Some in society & in Churches might not agree with that. They would suggest that the Old Testament is irrelevant and that it has no bearing on the Church or its future. I beg to differ. God’s revelations to mankind are a progressive sequence – they all fit together, each one adding to the previous.

The Son superior to the Prophets

At the start of Chapter 1, the writer contrasts the old & the new in 3 ways – the method, time and agent. He talks about revelation – God spoke (He is the source), but man (e.g. Prophets) is the agent. He used man to reveal.

He also mentions that God’s revelation came in successive portions. God didn’t give His whole revelation all at the one time. He gave it in little bits over the span of 1,600 years.

Think about it. He gives a little bit of revelation in a 1 chapter book like Obadiah. In the Book of Isaiah, God gives a large portion of His revelation in 66 Chapters. Some Prophets ministered sometimes for a month like Haggai; others’ prophetic ministries covered their whole lifetime (like Moses & Daniel).

Every time God gave some revelation, He answered certain questions, but there was always some that were left unanswered. Revelation was never final, but it was always progressive.
God’s revelation came in various ways & means. God’s revelation came in creative acts, through the Patriarchs, through prophets & even angels & events.

It came in different forms – visions, rules & regulations & laws, sometimes by types (e.g. Boaz, kinsmen-redeemer), sometimes by prophecies.

**God’s revelation though was never final, always incomplete.**

When God revealed to the forefathers, it was through the prophets. They received the revelation directly, aided by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. They had the unshakeable conviction to say that ‘God says …’. They spoke what God had given to them.

1 Peter 1:11 suggests the same point:

> Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.

Revelation came through the prophets as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. That’s why the Scriptures are God-breathed! 2 Timothy 3:16:

> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Prophets spoke exactly what God wanted them to speak, down to the very word. They had a unique authority and yet they were so ill-treated (Hebrews 11:33ff).

Notice that the word ‘prophets’ is plural – because there were many. God used many Prophets to reveal his plans. The ‘fathers’ is not just Abraham, Isaac & Jacob etc. – it means the whole Old Testament. The ‘fathers’ received the Old Testament revelation.

Let me say it again ➔ God's revelation though was never final, always incomplete. There was a better method of communication needed. The writer of Hebrews recognizes that this has now come in Jesus Christ. (“But in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son”.)
The past although important and incomplete has now given way to better things. What better way for someone to get the message across than to send their own son.

No more emails, facsimiles, telegrams, text messages, God now chooses the best way – He sends his Son to communicate His perfect will **personally**. Can’t get any clearer than that! When the Son arrives it is a once-and-for-all revelation!

This is really the theme of this Book – to show that while the past was good (it HAD to be because God instituted it), the present, which is God’s own Son, is BETTER (the best. Much more superior to anything before it).

If men cannot learn about God from His Son, then no amount of Prophetic voices / actions would convince them.

**The 7 Statements about the Son (vv2-3)**

The writer doesn’t reveal God’s Son to be Jesus ... yet! That occurs in Chapter 2 verse 9. But prior to that the writer gives us a description about the Son through 7 statements listed in verses 2-3:

- **The heir of all things** (the focal point of the universe)
- **Through whom he made the universe** (or ages – He was in control of God’s plan/program throughout all the ages of time)
- **The radiance (or reflection, or out-shining) of God’s glory** (see also Cana miracle - John 2:11). Jews knew it as the Shekinah glory – the visible manifestation of the presence of God.
- **An exact representation of God’s being** (sharing His nature/character – wax seal or coin die bears the same perfect image as the stamp/die that created it). He is the precise representation of God the Father. All that is in the Father is in the Son. Refer also Colossians 1:15.
- **Sustainer of all things by his powerful words** (wrong idea that God as a watchmaker, after making the ‘watch’, leaves it to run on it’s own mechanism. The N.T. view is that the Son is dynamically active in the creation, carrying it to a predetermined goal set by God the Father. John 1:1-3. The stability of creation and it’s order is evidence of the power behind it.)
- **Provider of purification of sins** (man cannot do this, although the Pharisees thought that good works & self-effort could achieve this). The Son is man’s Redeemer. Purification is not just forgiveness, but includes cleansing. It is a completed act (aorist tense). Up till now it was done through sacrifice. But the writer mentions in Hebrews 10:4 that the blood of bulls & goats has not
taken away/cleansed even one sin. The Son is being introduced as the priesthood (looked at further in Hebrews 5-7).

- **Sits at the right hand of God the Father** (ascends the throne, after the purification of sins. Right hand is the place of honour – refer Psalm 110:1 – or as an equal to God. Sitting down = accomplishment/finished the task (Hebrews 10:12). Christ’s sacrificial work is done. His present work at the right hand of God now is to intercede for us (Romans 8:34).

Pretty impressive description of the Son don’t you think? There are some deep theological questions that arise out of just these 2 verses.

But these 7 things show us that the Son is a unique ‘revealor’ superior to the Prophets. The final revealer of bringing the Old Testament prophecy to it’s conclusion (finality) in Him.

**The Son superior to the Angels**

I mentioned in last week’s message that the writer of Hebrews contrasts the Messiah Jesus with the 3 main pillars of Judaism – Moses, angels & the Levitical Priesthood – and shows that what the readers have now in Jesus (their Messiah) is FAR SUPERIOR to anything else.

In His person, Christ is better than:
- The angels
- Moses
- Levitical System
- Joshua

The writer of the Book of Hebrews now deals with the first of the 3 pillars of Judaism in Jesus’ day – the angels.

The whole point of the rest of Chapter 1 & some of Chapter 2 is to show that because Jesus is God, He is superior to angels. Jewish rabbis had a high regard for angels. Angels were held in high regard in that age, so it was important to show that Jesus was not just another angel (or the best angel). Here it is saying that the Son is better (than angels).

Modern day man is not so sure about angels. They appear a few times in the Gospels, and the writers regard these supernatural beings as real. Modern man however views angels as some mystical, mythical being. We don’t have time today
to discuss the spiritual realm of angels. What is merely being stated is that they were messengers from God, bringing revelation from Him to mankind.

But how do we view Christ’s supremacy to angels when in Hebrews 2:9 it says that Jesus was made a little lower than the angels. Doesn’t that refute what I’ve just said?

Short answer – NO. When God became man in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, when he became incarnate (came in the flesh among us), He became a little lower than the angels. Nevertheless, when He ascended back to heaven, He became better/higher than the angels again. Because of his deity, even in His humanity, He became better than the angels.

Because of the Son’s perfect obedience, he received a more excellent / superior name. Revelation 19:12 also refers to this. When He returns He will have a name written that no man can know but Himself. We know Him as the ‘name that is above every name’ (Philippians 2:9), or Yeshua or Jesus. But when He entered into Heaven, God the Father gave Him a more excellent name, a name that only He alone knows, a name which we may never know.

The writer now goes on to prove the superiority of the Son to angels in the next 9 verses (verses 5-13) by using 7 passages from the Old Testament.

The first passage comes from Psalm 2:7 and it’s a declaration of Jesus’ Sonship. The only begotten doesn’t emphasize birth or origin. It is a legal term that stresses the right of the firstborn.

In the Roman culture of Jesus’ day a Roman son who was born into a Roman family was positionally always a son. However, only when he reached the age of maturity was he declared a son by the Father.

We have the same picture here. As far as the relation goes, Jesus was always the Eternal Son in His relationship with God the Father, but at a certain point, He was declared a Son. Any idea when that was? He was declared a Son at His Resurrection (see Acts 13:33, Romans 1:3-4).

Angels are called ‘sons of God’ in the Old Testament, but that is a collective term (Genesis 6:1-4; Job 1:6; 2:1, 38:7, Psalm 29:1). It is never used individually to describe ‘an’ angel.

Believers are called the sons of God in the New Testament due to their adoption, but Jesus is the only begotten Son – a unique relationship that is not true of either angels or believers.
Jesus was declared the Son of God several times in His lifetime. For example, when Gabriel was speaking to Mary and declared that her son would be the Son of God (Luke 1:35). Another example is Jesus’s baptism in Mark1:11. A third time is at Jesus’ transfiguration (Luke 9:35). Paul points out in Romans 1:4 by virtue of His Resurrection, He was declared to be the Son of God.

There is something different about the Messiah’s Sonship that is not true about either angels or Believers.

The second passage quoted is II Samuel 7:14 and is part of the Davidic Covenant – an oracle given to David. Jesus fulfills this covenant in that the key promise of the Davidic Covenant is that the God-Man descendant of David is destined to rule over a saved & restored Israel from Jerusalem and from the Throne of David (Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6). No angel will ever have this privilege to rule over Israel in the Messianic Kingdom.

The third quotation comes from either Deuteronomy 32:43 or Psalm 97:7. They say the same thing – it calls ALL angels to worship Him. They are commanded to worship Him. The context is at the final judgment. One day He is coming again (Second Coming) and at that time all angels will worship Him. So because of this, the writer is saying that angels are inferior to the Son, who is being worshipped.

The fourth quotation is from Psalm 104:4 which stresses that the angels are servants. It speaks of the transitory nature of angels (they are made/created), as opposed to the eternal character of the Son. Since angels are only servants, subjected to their Master, and in this case the Master is the Son, then Jesus as the Son is seen to be superior to them. Angels were created to be religiously devoted to the Son. They are created as creatures to function within the limits they were created for – which is to carry out the wishes of their Creator.

The fifth quotation in verses 8 & 9 is from Psalm 45: 7-8 and emphasizes Jesus’ deity and His authority in the Messianic Kingdom. Once again you get this contrast between the eternal of the Son, and the transitory nature of the angels. He is God (and therefore Creator) and therefore Master of all the angels. He has an eternal throne, which no angel has. He is anointed with the Holy Spirit, the angels are not.

He loves righteousness, hates wickedness (Only Christ has perfectly fulfilled both) and is set above His companions / associates. He is anointed (an expression of gladness and a sign of favour), received at His baptism (Acts 10:38) and is exalted above all. The title ‘Christ’ actually means ‘the anointed One’. A fairly important
theme (anointing) in a Book that goes on later to talk about our High Priest Jesus, remembering that all the Priests of Aaron’s line were anointed as they took up their office.

Verses 10-12 in Hebrews Chapter 1 mentions the **sixth** quotation – from Psalm 102:25-27. It points out a couple of things – Jesus is superior in His existence; He is the Creator of the universe; He is sovereign over changes in the universe; He is the unchangeable Lord in the midst of a changing universe; He is eternal and, while He is eternal, one day the universe will be discarded like an old piece of cloth (garment). Revelation 6:14 mentions ‘You will roll them up’ (like a scroll). The universe is temporal (II Peter 3:10 saying that it will be dissolved), BUT the Son is eternal – ‘they will perish, but You remain’. This is in contrast to what the Greeks and Romans believed - that the universe was indestructible. Christ’s timelessness is important – we’ll look at that further when we come to the order of Melchizedek.

In verse 13 of Hebrews, the **seventh** (and last) passage cited is from Psalm 110:1. It predicts the Messiah’s enthronement in glory & His seat at the right hand of the Father. The Son is a partner in the Father’s work. Because He is sitting, His work is complete. In ancient times, the one who sits at the right hand of the King has to be the King’s equal. When one King went to visit another King, he would sit at the Host King’s right hand. The fact that Jesus is seated at the right hand of God indicates that He is equal with God.

The writer then concludes this section about Jesus being superior to the angels, by describing the status of angels. Jesus is seated – His work is complete, but what are the angels doing? They are still busy doing their work. Their work is not finished. They are never described as sitting, and certainly not on a throne in Heaven.

They are ALL (all ranks of angels) ministering spirits. They are not mentioned as slaves, because they are free agents voluntarily working in the employ of another. Angels are religiously devoted to serve those who inherit salvation. This is about as close as the Bible gets to showing that Believers have *guardian angels*. (Note – it’s interesting that no definition of salvation is mentioned, which indicates that the readers knew what was meant.)

They are assigned specifically to care for us, and this care begins at infancy (Matthew 18:10) and continues throughout our lives (Psalm 91:11). The existence of guardian angels does not mean they make sure nothing bad happens to Believers. Bad things will happen to Believers!! They are guarding in the sense that nothing will happen to Believers outside the will of God.
One angelic role is to observe us. Ecclesiastes 5:6 says that angels observe what we say. They observe our sufferings (1 Corinthians 4:9), and angels even observe what we wear (1 Corinthians 11:10).

Luke 16:22 states that when a believer dies, their soul is escorted to Heaven by angels.

Jesus’ superiority is stressed, but also His absolute power over His enemies. What the writer is importantly stressing is that heavenly messengers are occupied in ministry directed towards the salvation of mankind. God’s plan of salvation is on people, thought of as heirs (inheriting salvation).

In my will I am leaving things that are worth possessing to my children. I mention them by name (e.g. wedding rings, jewelry, my golf clubs). They are important or valuable etc. My children are heirs to these things. I have arranged this well into the future through my will.

Christian salvation is something worth possessing – it’s valuable and important – arranged into the future by the will of our Heavenly Father. We are heirs to this great and valuable salvation. If you are saved in Christ, your salvation is the most important thing given to you. You don’t need anything else, even though the marketers on TV would suggest that you do!

In a minute, we're going to sing about this great possession arranged in advance by the will of the Father. Of course it was only possible through the Son, Jesus. He is enough for us. Jesus + nothing = everything!!!

Christ (our Anointed High Priest) is enough for us.

**CONCLUSION:**

WOW – there is so much in these first 14 verses of Chapter 1 of Hebrews. Is it making sense to you so far? The best is yet to come – we’re only just getting started.

When you think about it, Christ had to be superior to all others, including angels, to become our High Priest, a function that No angel could perform.

Next week we will look at Chapter 2 of Hebrews – we start to look at the warning about the danger of drifting. Homework for next week is to read Chapter 2.

Next week: **Hebrews Chapter 2 – Everything under Jesus’ Control**
Let's pray …

Loving and Mighty Father God, We thank you that your Son is enough for us, for our salvation. Help us to recognize as we go through this series in your Word, that Jesus is better than anything that this world, past & present, can promise to us.

Grow us as we realize your sovereignty over all of the universe. We thank you that you are unchanging in our changing worlds. That you can be depended upon. Jesus, you are enough for us. Your sacrificial blood is sufficient for us. Your work is completed, now seated at the right hand of God. May we, with many others, yield to your power, and declare that Jesus is LORD, that many would be included in your Kingdom when you return.

Encourage us as we await that Day. May you find each of us ready. Ready us this week as you reveal your will in each of our lives through prayer and as we listen to You. Thank you for the Son – an expression of your favour towards us.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Closing Song ~ Christ is Enough for me
Hebrews 1  (New International Version)

God’s Final Word: His Son

1 In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. 4 So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

The Son Superior to Angels

5 For to which of the angels did God ever say,
“You are my Son; today I have become your Father”?

Or again,
“I will be his Father, and he will be my Son”?

6 And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says,
“Let all God’s angels worship him.”

7 In speaking of the angels he says,
“He makes his angels spirits, and his servants flames of fire.”

8 But about the Son he says,
“Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever;
a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.
You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions
by anointing you with the oil of joy.”
10 He also says,

“In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.

11 They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment.

12 You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.”

13 To which of the angels did God ever say,

“Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?

14 Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?