

God's aim in the book of Hebrews is to give you joyful, courageous endurance to follow Jesus all the way to the end. Through trials, suffering, setbacks, losses, and ongoing struggle against sin. To not give up or give in, but to keep going. And this is something God gives - graciously and powerfully to persevere!

Hebrews was written with this specific concern in mind. The author wants to urge these people to go all the way with Jesus... The original audience was a group of Hellenistic Jews, who had converted to Christ. Shortly thereafter, they began to experience severe persecution. And family members and friends were suffering. And friends were abandoning the faith. And they experienced what it was like to be marginalized and viewed as outcasts. Not to mention the garden variety temptations/hardships we all face in a broken and fallen world.

They were discouraged and may have started to wonder, "Wait a second, I thought things were supposed to get easier with Jesus." Their faith is weakened, they had begun drift from the gospel, to lag behind, growing discouraged, and were giving evidence that they were thinking about leaving Christ and returning to Judaism.

The author's primary strategy to encourage these beleaguered Christians was to lift Jesus higher and higher. This is the medicine they needed to go all the way with Christ. And it's the antidote we need as well. Friday, I read this: Matthew 20:32-33 says, "*What do you want me to do for you? / Lord, let our eyes be opened.*" For when the eyes of faith are lifted to see Christ, in his rich and full accomplishment on our behalf, the Spirit fills, our faith grows and soars, our joy is lifted, our courage is invigorated, and we are strengthened to run with endurance. Hebrews 12:1-2 is basically the overarching message of Hebrews. And so lifting Jesus up, lifting him high in his supremacy is what the book of Hebrews does. And we see it right from the start. *The first thing the author wants us to know is that Jesus is God's final message. Look at the opening words:*

*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...*

### **God's final and complete word... his Son!**

There is a clear contrast of how and through whom God spoke in the past with how he has spoken in these last days. God is a speaking God - who spoke through prophets, at many times from the beginning, and in many ways. Think of all the ways God spoke to and through his prophets - dreams and visions, strange prophetic acts (Hosea), the audible voice, angel of the Lord, still small voice, through Moses on tablets of stone, etc.

But in these last days, there is a superior message and superior messenger. It's a superior messenger in that it is not another prophet, but it is the Son himself. And it's a superior message - which is the Son himself. Literally, it says "*in these last days, he has spoken to us in Son.*" It is not just that God has spoken by his Son, but that it is "in Son". In other words, the Son is the message. He is the word of God. He is the message of God. John 1:1. And this is God's final message. Notice it says, "in these last days". This is not talking about the few years just before the great tribulation or the days just before the second coming of Christ. The phrase "last days" means the age from the resurrection to the second coming. We have been in the last days for almost 2,000 years now. God has one final message in these last days - it is Christ. So we can do no better than exalt Jesus and speak of Jesus.

This is wonderfully illustrated in Matthew 17 when Peter, James, and John are on the mountain with Jesus when he is transfigured. And Moses and Elijah show up. Peter had a great idea... (build a tent for the three of them). Peter heard the words of God, *"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him!"* The eternal Son is God's final word.

And to convince us that God's final word is worth listening to, the author describes the Son. He piles truth upon truth upon truth - elevating Jesus higher and higher. You need more than cliches and vague notions about Jesus. Believe in Jesus. Let's look at seven truths about Christ - his Person and work. **He is creator, sustainer, heir, radiance, representer, purifier, and ruler.** Lord, open our eyes... please open our eyes.

**First, Jesus is the Creator of all things. V. 2 says, "Through whom he created the world,"**

More literally it says, "through whom he created the *ages*". Meaning all the periods of time and all things manifested in time. Kent Hughes in his commentary put it this way: *"Jesus was the agent in whom and through whom the entire universe of space and time was created."* This is the consistent apostolic witness. Paul said in Colossians 1:16: *"By him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities..."* John 1:3 says, *"All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made."*

Think about the immensity of the universe. The diameter of the solar system 7.5 billion miles. Which means, at 70 mph, it would take a cool 12,231 years to drive from one end to the other. 200 billion solar systems in the Milky Way Galaxy. 100 billion galaxies in the universe. All of it created "through Christ". Here's something else that will boggle your mind. 70 sextillion stars in the known universe (grains of sand X 10). And Jesus created it all, out of nothing! Psalm 33:9: *"He spoke and it came to be; he commanded and it stood firm."*

Application: Go outside tonight (or the next clear night), look up at the night sky with its trillions of stars. It is so good for us to feel our smallness. We too often think of ourselves as a pretty big deal. Big Christ, little you!

**Second, Jesus is Sustainer of all things. V. 3 says, "he upholds the universe by the word of his power,"**

Everything exists "through him". The word upholds means to "bear up" or "keep from falling down". Jesus holds everything up at every moment. He doesn't passively hold up the universe like the Greek Mythology figure Atlas, who is hunched over with the universe on his shoulders. Jesus, mightily and actively holds up and sustains all things - and he doesn't break a sweat!

Colossians 1:17 says, *"In him, all things hold together."* The 70 sextillion stars and billions of galaxies - he holds it up, he holds it together. He is the glue that keeps it all together. And he is the One who holds your life together. He holds you life in his hand. You know what this means? Every day. Every hour. Every breath, is a gift from the Lord Jesus Christ! He sustains you at this very moment. You are alive and breathing right now because of him. And how does he do it? By his powerful word - "by the word of his power." God spoke all things into existence through his audible, spoken word. Christ, the Sustainer of all things upholds all things by his spoken word. In Christ Alone: "No guilt in life, no fear in death..." Christ is the sustainer of all things.

**Third, Jesus is Inheritor of all things. V. 2 says, "whom he appointed heir of all things"**

Kent Hughes: *“Everything in the universe has its purpose and destiny in relation to the Heir, Jesus Christ.”* In other words, everything is ultimately “for him”. Colossians 1:16 (already quoted) says, *“All things were created through him and FOR him.”* He is the inheritor of ALL things in creation.

But there is a particular portion of his inheritance that Jesus has a special concern for. When my dad died and my brother, sisters, and I were going through his house deciding what we wanted to keep and what just needed to be given away or thrown away, there were two things I had a special interest in. One was his bible (explain). And second was the plaque that hung in our kitchen all the years growing up that said, “DeGroot Family” and Joshua 24:15: *“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”* There is a part of the inheritance that Jesus is most interested in - the souls of those he died for. In Ephesians 1:18, Paul prays that their eyes would be opened to know *“what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,”* The choicest part of Christ’s inheritance is his people. His bride. The heir of all things, Jesus Christ, treasures his people most. And amazingly because we are adopted sons and daughters, Romans 8 says we are “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.” How can you even get your mind around that? You can’t! Just say, Yes and AMEN!

**Fourth, Jesus is the Radiance of God’s glory. V. 3 says, *“He is the radiance of the glory of God”***

Jesus does not reflect the glory of God, he radiates it. There is a vast difference between the two. The moon reflects light, but the sun radiates light, as the source of light. Jesus radiates God’s glory because he is part of it, being a member of the Trinity. There are a couple of times the curtain gets pulled back and we get a glimpse of the uncreated glory of God shining forth through Christ. One is in Matthew 17 where we see Jesus being transfigured and it says, *“his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.”* After his resurrection and glorification, when he appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus and radiated the glory of God, it was so bright, it blinded him.

**Fifth, Jesus is the Representative of the nature of God. V. 3 says, *“the exact imprint of his nature.”***

The words “exact imprint” speaks of something like a signet ring, which when pressed on soft wax, puts the exact imprint of the King’s authenticating mark. The point is that Jesus perfectly represents the nature of God the Father. There is no discord between the Father and the Son. There is no OT God who woke up on the wrong side of the bed and the nice and friendly and harmless God of the NT seen in Jesus. Jesus said clearly, unmistakably to Philip: *“If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.”* Though Jesus is a distinct Person, he is the exact imprint of the Father’s character. So, when you see Jesus blessing children/chasing money changers out of the temple with a whip, you see God. When you see Jesus weeping with Mary and pronouncing judgment on the Pharisees, you see God. When Jesus speaks of the eternal joy of heaven and the eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth in hell, he is perfectly representing God. And of course, Christ’s chief purpose in coming to earth to seek and save lost sinners shows the nature of God’s love and grace.

**Sixth, Jesus is the Purifier of our sins. V. 3 says, *“After making purification for our sins, he sat down.”***

This supreme, glorious Lord who made us and sustains us and for whom we exist, came to die for us. He came to pay for our sins with his own blood. He made purification for our sins. But the emphasis is on what he did after making purification for sins. He sat down. Not because he was tired after a hard day’s work. He sat down because he work was done. We will discover this is one of the big themes of Hebrews. Jesus is a high priest who made ONE offering for all time and then his work of atoning for sins was DONE.

Under the Old Covenant, the high priest's work never ended. There was always another sacrifice to be made. The daily ones and once a year on the day of atonement. Day after day and year after year, their work never ended. They never sat down. But Jesus, made purification for sins and his work of atoning for sins was complete. He was finished (John 19:10). So when he entered into heaven and presented his atoning work to the Father, the Father was pleased and the Son sat down. The Father was satisfied with it! If the Father is, you can be too! Are you resting *and* rejoicing in the fact that Jesus sat down? That your sins, O the bliss of this glorious thought. Your sins, not in part, but the whole, were nailed to the cross and you bear them no more!!! Sins removed. The gift of righteousness given. Once for all. The perfection of the work of Christ. Jesus did not come merely to make salvation possible. He came to SAVE!! He made purification of sins! We could never pay for our own sins. He did.

### **Seventh, Jesus is the Ruler at God's right hand.**

He sat down where? Verse 3 says, "at the right hand of the Majesty on high." Made purification through his death on the cross. But he rose, then ascended to the place of ruling exaltation. He sits at the place of highest honor in all the universe - at the Father's right hand. He sits enthroned as Lord. Psalm 110:1 (quoted often in Hebrews and Jesus applies to himself).

And wonder of wonders. It is here, at the Father's right hand, supremely exalted, that Romans 8 says that he intercedes for us. He prays for us. Listen to Romans 8:34:

*Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died - more than that who was raised - who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.*

### **CONCLUSION AND APPLICATION**

Let us run with endurance... looking to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Not a vague notion of Jesus as just the supremely nice Person in the universe. But the eternal Son - who created all things, sustains all things, is heir of all things, the radiance of God's glory, the exact imprint of his nature, the once-for-all Purifier of our sins, and the exalted King who always prays for us.

Do you see why Christ is God's final word/message? We can do no better than to build our lives on Him! There is nothing more important than to hear and order your life according to God's message to you. You were made to be thrilled with Christ. Full of Him. And live for his glory... all the way to the end.