
Into Thy Word Bible Study in Hebrews

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Hebrews 1:1-4: Jesus is Supreme!

General idea: God's best is saved for last; His spoken Word is through His Son to us. This passage brings an important theme that God works and wants to speak to us. He is fully God, one with the Father, and He is most far greater to all! Jesus Christ is *Excelsior par excellence LORD*, the surpassing greatness of all that is or ever will be! Who is Jesus to you? How does this hold up to who He is in reality as revealed in the Scriptures? Is Jesus the central figure in your life as He is the central figure in the entire universe? Jesus is the Ultimate, He is God's Son, He is the Heir of all things, and He is Supreme! It is imperative we know who Jesus is in our last days, as He is the One, the Promise, and our Savior. Jesus created the world and holds all things together, whose imprint is in all things and radiates God's Glory, presence, and Awe. He sits at God's right hand and controls the universe. He is also the One spoken of by the prophets, who came to save and take away our sins. Jesus is Supreme and even superior to any created thing, including angels.

Contexts: The Epistle of Hebrews introduces two major themes; one is the divinity of Christ. He is supreme over all—over traditions, Law, and all that was created, including angels. He is the Ultimate Word of God! Jesus is the heir of all things. He is incarnate, He made the universe, and He is the radiance of God's glory and sustains all things. In so doing, He is able to give us redemption and purify us from our sins (Mark 16:19; Eph 1:20; Col 1:15-20; 3:1; 1 Pet. 3:22). This passage also introduces a second major theme; God is the One who speaks (Heb. 2:2-3; 4:12; 6:5; 11:3; 12:25). He is a God of promise and fact, He has an inheritance and an Inheritor and a role for us. The audience was a Church that was confused about the role of Christ and angels and which was superior. They tried to compromise His status to appease pagans and Jews. This passage is in a classic, formal Jewish style similar to the opening of "Ecclesiasticus," a popular apocrypha Jewish wisdom book (*deuterocanonical*) written in a high language style.

Commentary, Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *In the past/long ago God spoke.* God speaks to His Son and to His people through His Son, here referring to the "prophetic revelations" such as Moses and Isaiah where His voice was heard and written down for us to hear too. As great as this was, it was incomplete and waiting for a culmination and fruition; now through Christ, His revelation is clear and complete (Acts 2:17; 1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 10:1; 13:20; 1 John 2:18).

- *At many times and in various/many ways.* God is the “ultimate author” and uses many ways and means of communicating such as visions, direct speaking, angels, dreams, and people to bring His message of hope and salvation as well as His precepts through the periods of time called “Covenants.” The Old Testament was incomplete and sporadic, lacking fullness and finality. At the same time, God carefully and progressively gave humanity, piece by piece, His instructions, revelations, and precepts which they could comprehend, and culminated with Christ. This does not mean God has evolved or changed (Num. 12:6-8; Heb. 3:5).
- *Last days/latter days* are the time period or covenant, which marks the coming of the Son and refers to Christ’s redemptive work. It is last because all the previous time periods such as Creation and Mosaic Law are in the past, yet their precepts and imprints still echo and apply. Thus, this is the “last period” of God’s work and His speaking to humanity. This is also referring to the sudden nature of the *Christian era*. Again, a lot of Christians get this wrong; it is not necessarily a time reference (James 5:3, 1 Pet. 4: 7; 2 Pet. 3:3; Rev. 22:10). This does not mean *days*, as in the *days of a week*, or how much time until the second coming. Rather, it is all about Christ, who He is and how He comes about (Deut. 4:30-32; 8:16; Isa. 2:2; Jer. 23:20; Ezek. 38:16; Hos. 3:5; Joel 2:28; Micah 4:1; 1 Cor. 10:11).
- *By his Son.* Literally, “in a Son,” or the personal revelation and coming of Christ, echoing the prophecies, types, echoes, and shadows of the Old Testament coming to fruition with Christ. This sets up the argument of the centrality and supremacy of Christ as His Word *sits over God’s house*, meaning He is the final revelation. The point is this; anything that comes from Him is far greater and binding than any prescient or tradition (Col. 1:15-20; Heb. 3:6).
- *Heir of all things.* Christ is preeminent and holds all authority over all of creation. As Christ is heir, we are adopted as His heirs, receiving His work and grace and blessings (Psalm 110:1; Matt. 14:33; Mark 16:19; Luke 22:69; John 1:1-3; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 4:6-7; Eph. 1:21; Phil. 2:9; 1 Pet. 1:20).
- *He made the universe/world.* Meaning “all ages,” or all that exists, as Christ’s supremacy predates time and history. He is the Eternal Creator; He has always been and always will be, in contrast to the universe which was created. Christ is displayed throughout the universe. However, the universe is not God; that would be *pantheism* (Psalm. 33:6; 102: 25-27; Prov. 8:30; Rom. 1:18-20; Heb. 11:3).
- *Radiance/brightness of God’s glory.* The glory of our Lord is His genuine Holiness. This word actually means the “effulgence” (shine forth) of “divine wisdom.” For a Jew, this meant only God or the exact image of God. Here Jesus’ being is “imprinted,” meaning incarnate, personified, and displayed,

which is an attribute of God alone. In context and in application, this means Christ can and will redeem us (John 1:14, 18).

- *Exact representation of his being/nature/person.* This is a clear aspect of the Trinitarian aspect of God. It means the Son has “oneness” and exact essence with God the Father; they are one Being, yet distinct in “person,” each revealing the other. This also referred to the “engraving” stamp of Caesar on a coin that represented his honor, power, and authority (John 14:9; 2 Cor. 4:4-6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:13).
- *Sustaining all things/upholds the universe.* Christ is the One who not only made the universe, He holds it all together. Many Jews at this time believed that angels had a role in creation. This is also a contrast to the Greek god *Atlas*, who held the world on his shoulders. The Holy Grail in physics is the “unified field theory,” a formula that states how all disciplines of physics and physical law, all forces in nature from particles to galaxies and space time, are unified in a mathematical formula. Here is the answer (Col. 1:17; Heb. 12:26-28; 2 Pet. 3:4-7).
- *His powerful word* refers to the unshakable and immutable command of God: *Jesus Christ is LORD over ALL!*
- *Purification for sins* is what Jesus does for you and me. He atones—He pays the price of God’s wrath so we can be saved and be in His presence. This was a role of a Jewish priest; now, He is our High Priest (Heb. 9:14).
- *He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty* refers to Christ’s Majesty as He is “enthroned” with God and has full Kingship and ultimate superiority. He is not a copy, an imitator, a mere son, or a part or aspect of God; Jesus is fully God. Then He *sat down*, or became one of us, to identify with us and take our place for the punishment of our sins through His work and sacrifice on the cross (Psalm 110:1; Heb. 1:13; 10:11-12).
- *Superior to the angels* means Christ is greater than any role of Israel, the priesthood, traditions, Prophets, or Law. This phrase also sets up the argument for the following passage using various verses from the Old Testament, proving Christ’s coming and His Supremacy (Heb. 2:5-18).
- *Inherited* refers to Jesus being our Rescuer and Redeemer; He took on our human nature but without our sinfulness, and remained pure to pay our debt for our sins. In the process, His human nature voluntarily became lower than the angels, but as Fully God He is superior to them in essence, power, purpose, and distinction (Rom. 1:4; Heb. 2: 7, 14-15).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

Do you know people who are grumpy, stale, fruitless, and self-driven so all that comes from them is anger and bitterness? If they claim Christ as Lord, there is perhaps a “disconnect” between their faith, life, and hearing and the applying of God’s voice. Because God speaks to us, we have a responsibility to hear His Voice through His Word and apply what He says. His Son, Jesus, is our Lord and our example; His supremacy should remain in us as it does throughout time and the eternity of space. No matter whom you are or what you go through, Jesus Christ is Lord and is speaking to you!

Look at some of the attributes of Christ in this passage. He is supreme to all, created all things, is incarnate, He made you, and He is the radiance of God's glory who sustains all things. Now, look what He has done for you: gave you redemption and purification from sin. What have you done with these things? Jesus must echo throughout our nature and being, so we are full of Him and not full of our selves or the ways of the world. This will greatly impact our lives, our church, and our temperament. The more we learn of Christ, the more we can listen to Him and the more we can grow in Him. But, it takes the surrender of our being to His Ultimate Being; we must hear him so His presence is practiced and applied to our daily journey in life. This is what grows our faith, takes us through the stress and torments of life, and encourages and inspires others around us. The problem comes when we tend to only have ears for our circumstances, experiences, desires, and plans, intentionally or unintentionally muting His voice and seeking to compromise our Lord’s sovereignty over our personal lives. Remember; what He has for us is far greater and effectual than what we may have or have seen (Ezek. 1:28; 2:1; Phil. 3:1-14).

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. How does that make you feel? Have you ever inherited anything of significance? If so, how did you feel?

2. Who is Jesus to you? How does this hold up to who He is in reality as revealed in the Scriptures? How is Jesus more than just a name or a set of attributes?
3. Is Jesus the central figure in your life as He is the central figure in the entire universe? What gets in the way of this being felt and applied in your life?
4. What does it mean to you that Jesus is *Excelsior par excellence*? How would you rephrase that to make it more personal for you?
5. How do you display in your life that Jesus is Supreme and the Ultimate?
6. Why is it imperative that we know who Jesus is? What happens when we get lazy in our learning about Him? How does this affect your personal life and your church?
7. Because our LORD is the surpassing greatness of all that ever is or will be, I feel.....? I will.....? This will do what for me?
8. How do you feel that Jesus' imprint is in all things and radiates God's Glory? What can you do to be more aware of His presence and Awe? How can this build your faith?
9. Jesus is Supreme and even superior to any created thing, so why do we put so many things in front of Him in our Christian walk?
10. What does it mean to you that God is more than a promise and fact, but that He also speaks?
11. Why do you suppose these early Christians perhaps compromised Christ's status to appease people? How do some Christians do this today? What can you do to make sure you do not do this?
12. How can a weak or liberal church be convinced of the reality and veracity of Christ's centrality and supremacy? What can you do to make sure Jesus Christ is LORD to you? What can you do to allow His Radiance to echo throughout your mind and will, so you are full of Him and not full to your self or the ways of the world?