

# My Favorite Thing About HEBREWS

Hebrews 1:1-3

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The book of **HEBREWS** was written to Jewish Christians, who, at some point had experienced a saving relationship with Jesus. However, their faithfulness was wavering as persecution, outside influences, and love of Jewish traditions, began to replace their love and devotion to Jesus.

I believe Paul wrote Hebrews, but regardless of who authored the letter, 3 things are certain:

- He was familiar with the Old Testament and quoted from the Pentateuch and Psalms extensively (23 direct quotes come from these books).
- He believed the Old Testament pointed directly to Jesus.
- He was deeply concerned that his audience was in real danger of total abandonment of their belief in Jesus.

Which brings us to **My Favorite Thing About HEBREWS ---- Jesus is Better.**

Paul begins his letter with a grand affirmation:

- **Hebrews 1:1-3** - In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>**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.

## Jesus - better than angels

Angel worship was a real thing in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century and Paul had warned other believers of its dangers {see **Colossians 2:18**}. It is possible that these Jewish Christians were being swept up into this false religion, but whatever the situation, Paul needed his readers to understand that regardless of the role of angels in the past, nothing is better than Jesus.

- God called Jesus, not the angels, "**My Son**" – affirming His supreme rank and position within the God-head.
  - The fact that God "**The Father**" calls Jesus "**My Son**" is not an indication of Jesus' status as deity, but an acknowledgement of His role within the Plan of Salvation. Each member of the God-head is equal and each member has a distinct role to play. It's what I like to call heavenly math  $1+1=1$ .
- The Son is worshipped by the angels.
- The Son sits at God's right hand exercising all power and authority. The angels serve.
- The Son is "**Creator and Sustainer of the Universe**". Angels are "**ministering spirits**" - messengers to God's people.

**Hebrews 2:5-9** - It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. <sup>6</sup> But there is a place where someone has testified: "**What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? <sup>7</sup> You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor <sup>8</sup> and put everything under his feet.**" {Psalm 8:3-6} In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. <sup>9</sup> But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. – {Also see PP 64-65}

## Jesus - better than Moses

No human being was more revered in Jewish society than Moses – the "**deliverer**" and "**law giver**". He was **IT – THE GUY – NUMBER 1**. So, what Paul said next must have caused quite a disturbance to the readers of this letter:

- **Hebrews 3:3-6** - Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. <sup>5</sup> Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. <sup>6</sup> But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.

So, Jesus is better than angels and He's better than Moses. He is the fullest and most complete revelation of God ever gifted to humanity and Paul tells us straight up that the consequences for ignoring this special revelation are eternal:

- **Hebrews 2:1-3** - We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. <sup>2</sup> For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, <sup>3</sup> how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?
- **Hebrews 4:12-13** - For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. <sup>13</sup> Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

## Jesus - a better High Priest

Qualifications for the earthly priesthood:

- The High Priest must be God appointed from Aaron's family of the tribe of Levi (Ex 28:1).
- The High Priest must have something to offer, "**gifts and sacrifices**". The High Priest was also a sinner so he had to bring a sacrifice for himself as well for the people.
- The High Priest had to be able to "**deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness**".

Jesus was not of the house of Aaron or tribe of Levi. He was of the tribe of Judah {7:11-14}. How is it that He's a "**better**" High Priest?

- **Hebrews 6:19-20** - We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, <sup>20</sup> where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered, having become "**a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek**." {Genesis 14:18-20 & Ps. 110:4}
- **Hebrews 7:23-27** - Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; <sup>24</sup> but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. <sup>25</sup> Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. <sup>26</sup> Such a high priest meets our need -- one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. <sup>27</sup> Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.
- **Hebrews 4:14-16** - Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are -- yet was without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Within Paul's discussion of Jesus as a better High Priest, he touches briefly on the old covenant and introduces the new covenant. In doing so, he ignited a fire storm that still rages within Christian communities – Old Covenant vs. New Covenant.

The Old Covenant was based on what God would do for Israel and what Israel would do in response:

- **Exodus 19:3-8** - And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: <sup>4</sup> 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. <sup>5</sup> 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; <sup>6</sup> and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." <sup>7</sup> So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the LORD had commanded him. <sup>8</sup> And all the people answered together and said, "**All that the LORD has spoken we will do!**" And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD {see also Exodus 24:7}.

The weakness of the old covenant did not rest with God but with man and his inability to keep his side of the covenant = to live an obedient and holy life {see entire Old Testament}.

In Jesus we find a "**better**" covenant, not because the requirements of the covenant changed, but because human weakness was replaced in the equation. Jesus did what we could not do = He lived an obedient and holy life – He fulfilled our side of the Covenant.

- **John 6:38** - For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.
- **Philippians 2:5-8** - Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
- **Hebrews 8:10-12** - This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>11</sup> And they shall not teach one another or say to each other, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. <sup>12</sup> For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." {see Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 11:19-20; 36:26-27}

The New Covenant, then, is based on what God does and what Jesus does in our place – in it there is no weakness.

## Jesus - a better sacrifice

In chapter 9, Paul moved beyond the covenant to the daily and yearly sacrificial ministries of the Sanctuary {see Leviticus 1-7}.

The daily sacrifices removed the guilt of the people and their confessed sins were transferred – via the sacrificial blood – to the Most Holy Place.

The most important day of the year was The Day of Atonement. On that day the High Priest went behind the curtain into the Most Holy Place and cleansed it – via the sacrificial blood – of all the sins that had accumulated during the year, forever removing them from the Sanctuary.

As vitally important as the sanctuary system was, it was never intended to cure the sin problem. It functioned as a place holder and pointed to the ultimate, once-for-all sacrifice and ministry of Jesus who would – via His own blood – deal with the sin problem.

- **Hebrews 9:11-14** - When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not one that is man-made. <sup>12</sup> He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup> The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. <sup>14</sup> How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!
- **Hebrews 9:22** - Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins....
- **Hebrews 10:4** - For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.
- **Hebrews 10:10** - And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Jesus is **BETTER**.

**WHO** He is .... is better.

What He's **DONE** .... is better.

He's just **BETTER**.

- **Ellen White {RH May 30, 1907}** – Christ ***“gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”*** He made an offering so complete that through His grace every one may reach the standard of perfection. Of those who receive His grace and follow His example it will be written in the book of life, ***“Complete in Him – without spot or stain”***.
- **Ellen White {SC 62.2}**: He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.

**Hebrews 10:19-23** - Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus...<sup>21</sup> and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup> **Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful.**