**Bethel Christian Fellowship**

**Fair Lawn, NJ**

**Hebrews (2): The Book Of Better Things**

**“God’s Final Revelation In His Son”**

**Hebrews 1:1-3**

**January 14, 2024**

The great theme of the Epistle to the Hebrews is that Jesus Christ is better than everything that came before Him. That’s why the author calls his readers to press forward in their relationship to Him, and not to turn back to the ways of the Old Covenant. By pressing forward they have everything to gain, by turning back they have everything to lose. The same is true for us today.

That’s the reason our author begins his letter in the way that he does (vv. 1-2a). Without any introductory greeting, he plunges directly into the contrast between the two great stages of divine revelation. “*In the past*,” God spoke to the fathers through the prophets (the Old Testament era); but in “*these last days*” God has spoken to us in His Son (the New Testament era).

The earlier stage of God’s revelation was given at “many times” and in “many ways.” As great as those prophets were, no one prophet or prophecy revealed the fullness of what God had to say. But when Christ came, the Word spoken by Him was God’s final word. The “*many* times” and “*many ways*” by which God revealed Himself were like numerous pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. But *Jesus is the picture on the box*. He brings together all the various ways in which God once revealed Himself through the prophets.

In the second part of these verses, our author presents a seven-fold description of the Son of God (vv. 2b-3). These seven facts establish His greatness and show us why God’s revelation in Christ is far superior to the prophets of old. Indeed, the word spoken in His Son was God’s final word.

**A.** **The Contrast between the Two Stages of God’s Revelation (vv. 1-2a):** The Old Testament revelation was piecemeal and partial (v. 1), whereas the New Testament revelation is final and complete (v. 2a).

**1. The Old Testament Revelation (v. 1**): “*In the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways . . .*” The reference to “the past” points to the time preceding the coming of Christ, which was the era of the Old Testament. The “prophets” were the men through whom God revealed Himself to the nation Israel, beginning with Moses and ending with Malachi. (A time frame of approximately 1,000 years.)

During those many years, God spoke at “many times” (NIV) or “in many portions” (NASB). His revelation came piecemeal, bit by bit. If we were living in the days of Amos, for example, we would hear God’s cry for *social justice*. If we were listening to Isaiah, we would learn about God’s *holiness*; if we were hearing Hosea’s message, we would learn of God’s *unfailing love*. But no one prophet or prophecy revealed everything about God’s character, His purposes, and His will. Each of them only saw fragments.

God’s revelation also came to these men in “many ways.” He spoke to Moses in a burning bush, and in a still small voice to Elijah. Ezekiel saw the wheel, and the Valley of Dry Bones. Daniel received God’s revelation through a dream, and angelic messengers, and visions. But these varying modes of revelation were always partial and incomplete. They never measured up to the fullness of what God had to say – until He sent His Son.

**2. The New Testament Revelation (v.2 a)** “*. . . but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son* . . .” As many of us know, the New Testament consistently uses the phrase “last days” to refer to the time which began with Christ’s *first* coming and which ends with His *second* coming. Ever since the beginning of these last days, God has only spoken to us in the life and words of His eternal Son. Why? Because the Son possesses the nature of the Father and is best able to reveal the Father. “The story of divine revelation is a story of progression up to Christ,” writes F. F. Bruce, “but there is no progression beyond Him.” Everything we need to know about the Father’s character, His will, and His purposes for us has been revealed *in and through* His Son.

**B. The Superiority of God’s Revelation in His Son (vv. 2b-3)**. What follows are seven facts which demonstrate the supreme greatness of God’s eternal Son. Our author takes us from His past glory, through His incarnation and on to the majesty of His exaltation. These seven facts about the Son underscore His unique ability to effectively and finally reveal the Father.

**1. The Son has been “*appointed heir of all things*” (v. 2b)**. When the author of Hebrews writes that Jesus is “*the heir of all things,*” he is echoing what Paul has written at the conclusion to his hymn of praise to Christ; “*all things were created through him and for him*” (Col. 1:16). We find the same thought in Romans 11:36; “*For from him and through him and to him are all things*.” While it certainly doesn’t appear that Jesus owns it all at this present time, He will take ownership of everything when He returns to this earth at the end of the age. Everything will be His, and we will be “*fellow heirs*” with Him (Rom. 8:16-17a) and will reign with Him in the world to come “*forever and ever*” (Rev. 11:15).

**2.** **The Son was the One “*through whom He* *made the universe*” (v. 2c)**. Once again, our author is echoing the teaching of other New Testament authors. In John 1:3 we read that “*all things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that has been made;*” and in Colossians 1:16 we also read that “*all things have been created through him and by him*.” The reason Jesus inherits all things is because He has created all things, which points us to His preexistence and co-existence with the Father.

**3. The Son is “*the radiance of God’s glory*” (v. 3a)**. In the natural world, the rays of the sun are an extension of the brightness and brilliance and warmth of the sun. In fact, the sun cannot exist without its rays shining forth. In the same way, Jesus radiates the very nature and glory of God. To see Him is to see God; they are one and the same *in essence*, yet distinct *in person*.

**4. The Son is “*the exact representation of His being*” (v. 3b)**. In the world of numismatics, there are grading standards which determine the value of vintage coins. The highest grade is the coin that’s in mint state condition (MS 70); it is a flawless coin, appearing exactly as it was minted, with no trace of wear or damage, and with its full mint luster and brilliant toning.

In the same way that the image and lettering on a mint condition coin is the exact replica of the impress on the die, so the Son is “*the exact imprint*” (ESV) of God’snature. The image of God the Father is perfectly revealed in God the Son. “To see the Son is to see what the Father is like” (F. F. Bruce).

**5. The Son is “*sustaining all things by his powerful word*” (v. 3c)**. The word translated “sustaining” (NIV) or “upholding” (KJV) is literally “bearing.” The way it is used elsewhere in the Bible reveals that progress, or direction toward an end is involved. For example, in Numbers 11:14, Moses sought to *bear* Israel *along* under the guidance of God (the same word is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament). In the same way, God’s eternal Son leads all things along to its appointed goal, so that everything and everyone in the world achieves what God has created them for. Contrary to the thinking of the Deists, once God created the universe and everything in it, He didn’t pack up His bags and leave town!

**6. The Son has “*provided purification for sins*” (v. 3d)**. Jesus is not only the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, He is also the Redeemer. Through His redemptive work on the cross, He offered Himself as a “once for all” sacrifice for sin (7:27; 9:12; 10:10), thereby bringing “*many sons to glory*” (2:10). This *is* the glorious, good news of the gospel! All of our sins – past – present – and future – have been cleansed by the once – for – all sacrifice of Christ. The penalty for my sin has been paid, and the guilt of my sin has been cleansed!

**7. The Son “*has sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*” (v. 3e)**. As we know from numerous Old Testament texts, to be seated at someone’s right hand is to be placed in a position of *honor and privilege* (Cf. 1 Kings 2:19). We also know that the *Lord’s* right hand is the place of favor (Ps. 80:18; Jer. 22:24) and power (Ex. 15:6; Ps. 89:13; Isa. 48:13). To be seated in this way is to be *enthroned*, and is a sign that Christ is King over everything. But most important of all, His session at the right hand of God is a sign of *the sufficiency and finality* of His atoning sacrifice. By the *one* sacrifice of Himself, He has *fully* and *finally* and *forever* made purification of the sin of those for whom He died. With the task completed, He has sat down!

Jesus, therefore, is the *Prophet* through whom God has spoken finally and completely; the *Priest* who has offered the last and sufficient sacrifice for sin, and the *King* who sits enthroned at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. Small wonder He is “better” than prophets, and the angels, and Moses, and Aaron, and all the Levitical priests and their continual sacrifices.

In the shallow age in which we live, we are inclined to think that the preaching of solid Biblical doctrine is boring, impractical, and irrelevant. “I am not interested in doctrine,” we often hear, “just tell me how to (fill in the blank).” How utterly foolish! The more we come to know the supreme glory of God’s Son – who He is, and what He has done, and what He will continue to do on our behalf – the more we learn to *trust in Him*. As has often been said, a dwarfed theology leads to a stunted faith!

When the Savior calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee, the Bible says that the disciples “*were amazed and asked, ‘What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!’*” (Matt. 8:27). If the author of Hebrews had been in that little boat and had known then what he knew later, he would have answered, “It is no wonder He stills the storm, for He is the heir of all things, the One through whom the universe was created, the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His nature! You can trust Him in the storms of life!” The same is no less true for us today.