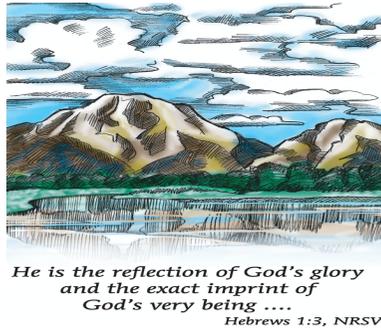


# HEBREWS STUDY 1.



## HEBREWS 1:1-4

A good and helpful way of viewing this Epistle is to see the writer of Hebrews as one preaching a sermon or giving a lecture. On the outset he states four things in the opening sentence of this passage.

**FIRST** - the writer contrasts the OT times with what has happened in Christ:

(1) The OT revelations came in *“many and various ways”*, whereas as revelation in Christ is *“once and for all.”*

(2) The OT revelation came in times past *“long ago”* to *“our ancestors”*; the new revelation has come *“in these last days . . . .to us.”*

(3) The OT revelation came *“by the prophets”*; the new revelation comes to us through God’s Son.

**SECOND** – the writer points out that both the old and the new revelation are part of one unchanging purpose. For things to be contrasted, there needs to be something in common, and that is the same work of God.

**THIRD** – the writer outlines who Christ is. This is the prologue of what is to be discussed later in greater detail.

(1) Christ is God’s Son. God has spoken to us by his Son, or, the one whom God has spoken through is rightly called *“Son.”*

(2) God has appointed his Son *“heir of all things”*, and is akin to say that God has given him the whole universe, so that it belongs to him by right.

(3) The gift is appropriate, because the Son was active at the beginning in creation – *“through whom he created the worlds.”* The implication is that even creation is secondary by comparison with the new thing that God has done through his Son.

(4) The Son is *“the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being.”* The Son is as inseparable from God as a sunbeam is from the Sun; as perfectly and permanently like him as the image on a coin is like the die which stamps it.

(5) What Christ is, cannot be separated from what he has done; and the purpose and effect of this work was to purify people from their sins.

(6) God has recognized what Christ has done by raising him to his right hand in heaven. This picture language means that Christ is uniquely close to God, and therefore supreme over all things.

**FOURTH** – what God has done in Christ is greater than anything he has done before. In particular, God has given to his Son a position higher than the angels.

## HEBREWS 1:5-14

The subjection of the world to come occurs only after the Son, astonishingly, is made *“lower than the angels.”* Jesus is fully human and experienced everything that is part of our human condition. This is tough to understand, especially as the opening verses claim that, *“The Son is heir to all things, through whom he created the worlds. He is the reflection of God’s glory, superior to the angels, and the Lord of all time!”*

Why did he have to walk of human history to defeat and death?

There is a reflection here on Psalm 8, which marvels that the majestic God, whose glory fills the skies would nonetheless treat human beings with great dignity – *“What is man that you are mindful of him? What is a son of man that you watch over him?”* And answers, *“You have made him a little lower than the angels, crowned him with glory*

*and honour, and set him above the works of your hands, subjecting all things under his feet."*

The writer of Hebrews treats the psalm as a statement not about all humanity but about one human being – Jesus. According to the gospel traditions, Jesus often referred to himself as the 'Son of Man'.

The writer is not trying to argue that Jesus was a tiny bit lower than the angels in the hierarchy of creation, that he came just to the edge of human life and dipped his little toe into the pool of suffering. Rather, he wants to claim, that, for a brief moment in time, the eternal and exalted Son purposefully and redemptively plummeted to the depths of human suffering and weakness.

Throughout, the writer has been quoting OT Scriptures to support his argument. The theme of his 'sermon' is the 'distinction between what we can see with our own eyes and what can only be seen by faith "*the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*"

The phrase "*subjecting all things under his feet*", sees the writer ringing the joyful news stated at the beginning of Hebrews - that God has placed everything in creation under the Son's control. But then it is as if the writer, looking at the congregation, says, '*But on Monday morning it doesn't look this way does it!*' In other words, we do not always show by our lives that we actually do see everything being under the Son's subjection!

It is as if the writer is calling us to look at the state of the world. It looks far from being under the Son's control; in fact the world looks chaotically out of control. So, the preacher/writer is asking the congregation, "Well then what do you see?" And as if imagining the preacher asking the question several times, holding the congregation in suspense, the answer is "*What we do see . . . is Jesus.*"

Now Jesus is in sight, the writer goes back and forth between what can be known about Jesus by sight and what can only be known

by faith; the truth about Jesus that can be "*seen*" and the truth about Jesus that must be "*heard*".

Everyone who saw Jesus pushed around like a common criminal knows that '*he was lower than the angels*' – everyone could see that. But it takes hearing the word of the gospel to know that this same Jesus is "*now crowned with glory and honour.*"

Everyone who watched Jesus die in agony on the cross knows about the 'suffering of death' – that could be seen. Only by what is heard could it be known that his death was in order to save humanity – "*that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*"

The writer is inferring that the 'eye' may win for a little while, but when all is said and done, it is the gospel heard through the 'ear' that turns out to hold the full truth.

Yes, Jesus did suffer, the whole world saw that; yes, Jesus did exhibit the weakness of human flesh; yes, Jesus did die, sharing the fate of all humanity. But, those were only pictures – Jesus was only '*for a little while lower than the angels*' and this descent into human history was for a distinct purpose.

When one hears the full message of the gospel, one recognizes beyond mere sight that Jesus' suffering was a necessary segment of the arc of grace that curves finally to the place we cannot yet see, the place where even now the Son is crowned with glory and honour.

