

Hebrews

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[0 : 00] Well, we have scarcely gotten underway with the epistle to the Hebrews, and by way of some introductory remarks, without being too repetitive, we want to remind you of the exclusivity of the audience.

There ought not to be any doubt that he is addressing these inspired remarks that are so content-filled and so rich with doctrine, and he is addressing them exclusively to the Jewish community.

However, there will be occasion for non-Jewish believers to make valid application of some of the principles that are included in the book. So, once again, the maxim is demonstrated that we have elaborated on in the past, and that is that while all of the Bible is for us, not all of the Bible is to us. And therein lies a very important distinction that must be kept in mind. This is especially true with an exclusive audience like the Jewish people to whom this epistle is written.

And I would also remind you again, there are three classes of Jewish people to whom the author that I frequently probably will refer to as Paul, I think Paul wrote it, but we cannot prove that conclusively.

[1 : 22] The three classes of Jewish people that he addressed this epistle, one is to those who are already on board, and they have already embraced Yeshua HaMashiach as their Messiah.

And then there are those Jews who constitute a second element, and they are those who are wavering. One day they think Jesus is the Messiah, the next day they're not so sure.

They are ambivalent. They can't quite make up their mind. They're not fully committed. And then thirdly, there are those who flatly deny that Jesus is the Messiah sent by God, and the apostle has some rather pointed remarks to address to them as well.

So, we return now to Ephesians chapter 1, where he begins explaining and making his case for the superiority of Jesus Christ in all things pertaining to God.

And he is going to, with one fell swoop, address the whole of the Jewish sacrificial system, the temple worship, and everything that is in connection with it.

[2 : 32] And he is going to say that Jesus Christ, in his person and in his work, is superior in every way to all of those old covenant elements.

They were all provided in a timely manner, but they were intended to be temporal. And Christ is provided as the fulfillment of all of those things with an eternal aspect rather than a temporal.

So, we have here, right at the outset, setting forth the nature and the person and work of Christ.

And he tells us in verse, well, let's just start reading with verse 1, and I'll save comment until we get a little further.

Here, God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past unto the fathers, that is, their ancestors, by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things.

This is referencing, of course, the incarnation of Christ, who, though he was God, did not count that equality with God a thing to be selfishly grasped or held on to, but he freely relinquished it, laid it aside, and came down and took upon him the form of a man, a human being.

[3 : 57] And he is described as the one who has been appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.

In Colossians 1 and Colossians 2 as well, we read that Christ is the one who is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Everything was made by him. Without him, John tells us, was nothing made that was made in John chapter 1. And here we find a full participation of the Son of God in creation, right along with the Father and with the Spirit.

This is a difficult concept for us to embrace because we do not have the ability to grasp the makeup of the triune Godhead.

And this, by the way, is a major sticking point, along with the subject of the existence of evil. It is a major sticking point for all of those who belong to any faith other than Christianity.

[5 : 06] And that has to do with the makeup, the configuration of the triune Godhead. How can there be a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit who comprise those three persons, yet who comprise but one God, not three gods, subsisting in one person?

That simply does not compute to our way of thinking. And I suggest that that is because we are limited to our level of thinking.

And I am saying, and I think the scriptures bear this out Old Testament and New, and for some reason, many people just do not want to give, to give credence to this idea, that God in his nature and being exists in a being, in a perspective, in a quality, in a kind, in a nature that is utterly, totally different from everything we humans know.

God is not a man that he should lie, neither the Son of Man that he should repent. God has a makeup, a character, a nature to him that so far transcends human nature and human character that we just cannot go there.

It is too high for us, the psalmist said. It is wonderful. I cannot attain unto it. We must be content with allowing God to be God. No, I don't understand the nature of the triune God.

[6 : 40] I do not understand how the Father is God, the Son is God, the Spirit is God. There are not three gods. There is one God subsisting in three persons. I don't understand that because I am limited to human mathematics, and God operates on a plane and in a sphere that is just totally different from ours.

Yes, Dan? I agree. I don't understand it, but I relate it to water. Water can be ice, liquid water, or water vapor.

It's still all water. Yeah, yeah. But it can be three different forms. And these are, God is in forms that we can't comprehend, but they're in three different forms. There are, thank you. There are a number of illustrations that we try to utilize to explain the nature of the Trinity.

And some of them, like the one with the water, is somewhat helpful, but they all fall short. The same way with the egg and the yolk and the shell and the white of the egg.

They all fall short. And this is a real difficult area, particularly for those of the Muslim faith, because they will not countenance, even for a moment, the idea, the possibility, that God could have a son.

[8 : 02] Because they limit themselves in their thinking that if God has a son, the son must have been produced the same way that humans produce sons.

And that is through sexual relations between two different sexes that produces an offspring. And to them, that is unthinkable that God could be involved in that.

And some of them actually think that Christians believe and Christians teach that God the Father, who is deity, had sex with Mary, the mother of Jesus, who is humanity.

And as a result, the offspring is God-man. That's their reasoning, and that's the way they look upon the Trinity, at least in most of the Muslim literature that I have read.

But nowhere does the Bible give any credence to that idea at all. We are of the conviction that in a way that only God could do, He impregnated the womb of the Virgin Mary with this supernatural seed.

[9 : 16] And that this seed was planted in her womb where it began to grow for, apparently, the nine-month gestation period.

And as a result, Jesus was born. But this is a far cry from sexual intercourse between a God and a human. And the Scriptures do not give credence to that at all.

Yes? My understanding in the Koran, in the chapter in the Koran, and the main point of it is that God had no son and Jesus Christ was not that son.

Yeah, well? I mean, it specifically points to Christianity. It does, and at the same time, it recognizes the person of Jesus Christ, but only as a prophet, not as the Son of God.

And it accords to Him credibility and decency and honesty and everything else. But you cannot have it both ways, because Jesus Christ has to be who He claimed to be, or He is the world's greatest con man who ever existed.

[10 : 21] And there is no in-between. There is no, as the philosophers say, the law of the excluded middle comes into play. And you cannot say that He fits somewhere in-between.

There is no in-between. Either is or He is not. And the Bible makes it very, very clear that in His character, nature, makeup, and quality, there is that about God which is utterly, completely different from humanity.

And we err greatly when we insist on bringing God down to the human level and applying human standards and human understandings because that will not compute.

He is just beyond that, and we need to keep that in mind. So, and the Scriptures, of course, make that quite clear. Old and New Testament. Continuing on now, we are told that this Son, by whom also He made the worlds, in verse 3, who being the brightness of His glory, and some other renditions here are helpful.

The American Standard Version says, who being the effulgence of His glory, Reigns translates it, who being an irradiated brightness of His glory, Basic English says, who being the outshining of His glory, the radiance of His glory, and we get just a hint of the Shekinah glory in all of these.

[11 : 56] This is the glory that was exuded from Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration when Peter, James, and John went up, and the Lord was transfigured before them, and He produced, from His very being, a brightness, a whiteness that was just overwhelming to those who were there and witnessed it.

And this is, I think, the same Shekinah glory that Solomon witnessed and experienced when the original temple was dedicated back in the Old Testament.

So, there is something about God that has a brightness, a glory to it. And by the way, when He comes, He will destroy, He will destroy the adversary with the brightness of His coming.

And when the earth, when the earth is submerged in darkness because of the sun withholding its light and the moon withholding its light, probably due to the atmospheric conditions that have been created in the atmosphere during this time of tribulation, that every eye is going to see Christ.

And even with all of this diffusion of darkness, every eye is going to behold Him when He comes.

This is Matthew 24 and Revelation 19. And the reason they are going to see Him quite clearly, He's bringing His own light.

[13 : 30] He will be the light. He is the light of the world and God is light and in Him is no darkness at all, John tells us. And this brightness, this whiteness, this light about Christ is one of His major characteristics and it's something that is going to fill the temple in heaven as well as having filled the temple here.

This is why there will be no need, no need for the sun there or the light there for the sun will be the light thereof. And this is the energy of a light, the likes of which we know nothing.

And the express image of His person. And upholding all things by the word of His power. This is a fascinating verse when you consider how things are held together and this matter that we call centrifugal force and the item of gravity which by the way no one, beginning with Sir Isaac Newton, no one has ever been able to explain.

The law of gravity still defies an explanation or an interpretation. And despite the fact that such notable scientists such as Stephen Hawking who is generally considered as the world's greatest physicist insist that there was there's no need for God because because the existence of the law of gravity made it possible for the universe to create itself.

Strange words to come from a very brilliant man but nonetheless this is what he said. And he never ventured a guess as to where the law of gravity came from or how he got here.

[15 : 20] And nobody knows why it works the way it does. All we know is that if you defy it you pay a price because it is a law that is imposed upon this physical world.

But here's something that you need about too. God being the utter otherness is not subject to the law of gravity.

He is not subject to any of these laws because God is not confined to this universe. God is not part of the universe and the universe is not part of God.

He exists independent of the universe and he brought it into existence. And along with it he created laws to govern the universe one of which is the law of gravity.

Another is the law of cause and effect that simply says everything that has a beginning has to have a cause.

[16 : 26] you cannot think of anything that has a beginning that did not have a cause. And the question has often been asked down through the ages well if God created everything who created God?

And we classify God as the uncaused first cause. He is not dependent upon anything or anyone. He is the eternal I am.

Not the I was or the I will be but the I am. And he exists independent from everything else. We're talking about an indescribable being and no superlatives that we can use begin to do him justice in his character, quality, nature, and makeup.

Dan? Is it possible even in human concept to describe God? I don't think it is possible at all for us to adequately describe God.

The closest that we can come is to say you want to know who God is and what God looks like. Look at Jesus Christ because he is what the writer of Hebrews says he is the he is the well the text says he is the brightness of his glory, he is the express image of his person, he upholds all things by the word of his power.

[17 : 56] Someone has put it this way that God took everything that he wanted us to know and he put it in a book and he took everything he wanted us to know about humanity and he put it in a person.

And one is the written word and the other is the living word. And that's the sum and substance of what we are all about and what God wants us to know.

Upholding all things by the word of his power. This law of gravity some have taken position and I not being all that scientifically minded and trained I can't vouch for it but I accept their estimation of it.

They are of the opinion that were it not for the cohesiveness that Christ provides with this very concept upholding all things and Ephesians Colossians talks about and by him all things consist and the word expresses the idea that all things hold together because he is holding all things together and were he ever to release his grip on the all things he holds together absolute oblivion would be the result everything would just fly off in every which direction and that which stabilizes and protects would be gone and that is that is part of his job description he is not only the creator of all things he is the sustainer of all things by him all things are held together and in him all things are complete it's a beautiful concept upholding all things by the word of his power this is this is the word that just said let there be light and there was light and let the earth bring forth this and that and this is the spoken word and it is by the way this spoken word that is described as a sword that proceeds from the mouth of

Christ in revelation 19 and it is this spoken word that he will utilize to simply dispatch and slay his enemies in revelation 19 when he comes to that and we are told flipping the page here that when he had by himself purged our sins this is more than anything else more than anything else in so far as humans are concerned this is who and what Jesus Christ is all about more than anything else in so far as humans are concerned because our number one problem our number one obstacle between us and God is our sin and Christ came for the express purpose of dealing with our sin and here the text tells us that he had by himself purged our sin that means cleansed that means forced out of being into nothingness that's the purging he emptied us of our sin and he filled us with his spirit this is why he is given the name redeemer and savior among other names because this is his chief work again in so far as humans are concerned because our big problem is our sin our big problem is the broken connection between us and

[21 : 40] God and Jesus came for the express purpose of reestablishing that broken connection and he did that by becoming the human bridge between God and man and this is why we must come to God through Christ because there is no other bridge and he had by himself purged our sins sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high some have pointed out and I think it is probably a rather poignant notice that he sat down which is perhaps a telling illustration that he was finished with what he did when the job is done you can sit down and you can rest from your labor and that's what he did and then by the way it is equally interesting to notice that in

Acts chapter 7 when Stephen who many regard as the first martyr of the Christian faith was being stoned to death he looked into heaven and the text says he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God and some have suggested that Jesus rose to his feet to welcome the first martyr into heaven not prepared to dispute that does make sense because here we have him seated but when Stephen saw him he saw him standing at the right hand of the father he sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high he didn't just sit down beside the majesty he sat down at the right hand and in the Bible the right hand has significance because it is the right hand that is most common and for those of us who are right handed

I think tests of strength have demonstrated conclusively that we have more strength and more power in our right hand than we do in our left and of course for left handed people it's the same way they have a predominance of strength and ability in their left hand I don't know about you but I count on my right hand for a lot there there's not very much I can do with my left hand it's almost worthless but again you don't want to do without it but the Bible puts an emphasis upon the right hand and God's right hand and this is an anthropomorphism and we've talked about that in the past that God is not made up of bodily features like we are but this is for the purpose of communication so it's a beautiful expression set down by the right hand of the majesty on high being made so much better than the angels as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they and this is a statement that needs a little bit of elaboration because there are some who jump on this particularly those of the

Jehovah's witnesses ilk and those who wish to utterly humanize the Lord Jesus at the expense of his deity and the scriptures make it quite clear that Jesus is fully God and fully man he is the theanthropic person he is the God man he is fully God and fully human and when they see the phrase here being made so much better than the angels they say aha you see Jesus had a beginning he was made that means that he didn't exist before he was made but the distinction is made here between his humanity and his deity you've got to bear in mind the fact that Jesus that Jesus before he came to this earth existed from eternity past as the eternal son of God but he did not have an eternal existence in his humanity his humanity he received at the conception when he was conceived in the womb of the virgin

Mary that's when his humanity began and we pointed out in time past that it is not it is not the birth of Christ that is the miracle it is the conception that is the miracle so far as we know the birth of Jesus was probably much like the birth of any other baby nothing miraculous about it but the miracle was in the conception and that makes a lot of difference so we would readily agree that in his humanity Jesus had a beginning in his deity of course he did not and it was in his pre-existence when the father son and spirit actually laid the plans the framework for the plan of redemption one of the songwriters put it this way oh oh the grace that drew salvation's plan oh the

[27 : 19] God that brought it oh the grace that brought it down to man beautiful beautiful hymn I think William R Newell wrote that in the old hymn at Calvary and that is an expression of what we have here in his humanity he began and I want you to consider this and this is just an aside but it's something else that's kind of mind-blowing in so far as the deity is concerned that the father the son and the spirit have existed from eternity past all in a spirit form being I don't know how the spirit form of the father differed from the spirit form of the spirit or the spirit form of the son but nonetheless this is what the scriptures seem to be teaching and what this means is when when Jesus addressed the woman at the well in chapter 4 and said God is spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth this means

Jesus is saying God is immaterial God is not made up of matter of stuff like we are flesh and bones God is spirit spirit is immaterial and spirit is what the father is spirit is what the son was before he became incarnated the question comes to mind what does that look like doesn't look like anything because in order for something to look like something it has to have physicality but spirit doesn't have physicality doesn't have materiality you cannot see spirit you cannot touch it you cannot measure it you cannot weigh it because it has no physical properties mind blowing is it not don and then frank well I think that this is borne out here in this passage in

Hebrews that he is the express image of the father and he is saying that everything that constitutes the father what makes the father what he is you find in the son and that's that's a powerful saying he has seen me has seen the father and in some respects we can say that of some human beings because there are some fathers and sons that look so much alike you know you talk about the chip off the old block you say well if you've seen the like him only 20 years difference but this is even more precise frank in the garden of eden had a walk and talk of thought yeah so it seems to me like he would have to be able to see God walking beside him so he could not be immaterial oh you're right absolutely right and I am of the opinion and again this is something that is probably a you know this is a wise man opinion you can take it or leave it but

I am personally I am persuaded that that when Adam was created by God this was a literal thing and if you want to take it figuratively you still have to have some accounting for Adam being here and when the text says that God fashioned Adam from the dust of the ground I think he really did just that I think he made a big old mud pot you will and shaped it in a human being and he is taken

from the dust of the ground and the text says that and this is I find just absolutely stunning the text says that God breathed into the nostrils of Adam and Adam became a living soul God breathed the breath of life into Adam now what I think this is suggesting is that God in his creating Adam was a theanthropic revelation a pre-incarnated expression of the deity I think that it was Jesus the son of God who actually filled that role of creation and formed Adam and then breathed into him the breath of life and Adam became a living soul and when the text says that we are made in the image and likeness of God most take that term image and likeness to be a tautology which in hermeneutics a tautology is you use two different words but they both mean the same thing so they say that that the image and the likeness are identical they mean the same thing it's just two different words that are used there [32 : 55] I think that's over gratuitous I don't see it that way at all I think that when he says in the image and in the likeness that when he created Adam in his image he made him after his own physical appearance that he took on him which is the same appearance that dwelt among us for 33 years that was his physicality and then the likeness is he made Adam not just a physical being but he made Adam a spirit being as well and it is this that enables man to connect with God that he has a human spirit that connects with God's spirit and that's our basis or our point of connection and when you are saved when you are born again it is your spirit that is born again that is made new not your body your body isn't changed one bit it's the immaterial part of your being that is regenerated that's the part of you that becomes new and when you die that spirit part of your being departs the body and goes to be with the

Lord so what we've got here if this is correct and I realize this sounds very simplistic but I'm also of the opinion that sometimes we try to make what the Bible says very very complex when maybe it's a lot simpler than what we're willing to admit we have to have something before some people are of such a mindset that it has to be so complicated that only a few masterminds and geniuses can understand it otherwise it can't be true and I think that that's a wrong approach I think that this book called the Bible is given to us to be a book of revelation not concealment and that God wants to communicate and that 95% of the Bible makes quite good sense when you take it at face value Dan if Adam was created from the ground is this where the term ashes to ashes is sure of course it is and scientifically the point has been made for many years that it is no coincidence that the very same chemical components that make up the human body are the same chemical components that are in the dust of the earth and it's because we are taken from the dust of the earth we are the Hebrew the Greek uses the word humus humus from which the word human is taken and that's decayed vegetable matter that's not very flattering is it that's what we are yes Joe it does seem like Hebrews is trying to explain the Godhead yes is that what is trying to get through to the Jews exactly there's nothing about salvation in Jews or in Hebrews about salvation for the people how to get salvation it's not about salvation oh well we'll find quite a bit we'll find quite a bit dealing with salvation oh yeah absolutely and it spells out and it contrasts it contrasts the temporal status that the Jewish people had in the Old Testament because of the sacrificial system and it talks about the high priest once a year going in and atoning for the sins of the people and then they had to go back next year and do it again and so on so all of this will come to surface as we move on through Hebrews but here in this very first chapter he is simply trying to establish the credentials for the person and work of Jesus Christ how that he is utterly worthy of our worship in fact he is going to go on in this very first chapter and make the point that he is far superior to all of the angels that this one this son of God is elevated to a position that is far above any that is given to angelic beings because Christ is not an angel he is deity enclosed in human flesh and more on this as we work our way through chapter one but thank you for your presence and I appreciate your input very much any other thing before we conclude happy birthday yeah okay thank you