

As we start tonight I want to highlight something I kind of brushed over quickly last week and that is in regard to the form of Greek in which this letter is written. I mentioned that this letter was written in Alexandrian Greek and not the more casual Koine Greek in which Paul tended to write. Alexandrian is much more formal and artistic and it is clear that the author really wanted to reach Greek speaking Jews through a poetic means that would closely connect them to their Hebrew past. For example, the language in just the first few verses is beautiful as it moves from thought to thought and makes these beautiful comparisons (which are actually quite aggressive comparisons which we will get into tonight). But consider:

- Long ago, at many times, in many ways,
- God spoke to our Fathers by the prophets,
- but in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son,
- whom He appointed the heir of all things
- through whom also He created the world.
- He is the radiance of the glory of God
- and the exact imprint of his nature,
- and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

Do you notice these sets of three which flow so beautifully when spoken? This would have touched, in that artistic place, the heart of the audience and brought back to mind so many of the stories within the Hebrew Tanakh. Saturday morning I was at the Goat having coffee and these two people were speaking Spanish with a slang that reminded me so much of my Great Grandma and my Grandma. Instantly I was flooded with memories of going to my Great Grandma's old adobe

house every Sunday and listening to the adults talk and tell stories even though I had no idea what they were saying as I did not understand barely a lick of Spanish. But the language, the sound, the slang was somehow imprinted in my memory and when I overheard these people speak it was like a warm blanket of good memories. I know that's weird, but I think that is what the author of Hebrews was hoping would happen with the audience. As you go through your own studies in the book of Hebrews, try and pick out the poetic way this language is structured and know that it would have impacted those who were reading it in a very emotional and personal way.

We are going to pick up in **1:3** as we only covered part of it last week. But just to refresh, our author is writing converted Jews who are holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling. And, remember, "Partakers" is a noun not a verb—so the audience is born-again believers who without question belong to God. The author however is seriously concerned that some of these believers have begun to turn back to their religious roots (the practices and beliefs of Judaism) in order to find relief from the intense oppression and persecution that they were receiving from the hands of unbelieving Jews. They had endured a lot of hostility as they were being watched, hunted, and even killed. They lived in constant fear of the sound of the footsteps outside their door expecting that at any moment the religious leaders would bust down their door and drag them away to prison and confiscate all their possessions.

The Spirit therefore writes, through an unknown author, in order to build up the faith of these believers and encourage them to continue to walk the path that had been so well trod by their forefathers. So the Spirit starts by talking about how big, gigantic and huge Jesus really is and how much better it is to worship

Him than to follow any religion that is merely just a shadow of the truth. In **1:1-3**, the Spirit explained that:

- The Son has always been part of the Godhead,
- The Son is of the same essence of the Father yet is distinct from the Father,
- As a Son, Jesus has the authority of the Father,
- Jesus possesses all that belongs to the Father,
- Jesus is the exact image of the Father,
- Jesus is the center point of all of the Father's activity with regard to mankind.
- All that the Father desires to express toward man is contained in the person of Jesus Christ.

But let's go a little further into our analysis of the last phrase in **1:3** ("He upholds the universe by the word of his power") as we will find that this statement is a direct punch in the nose at the foundations of the Jewish religious mindset.

So you have to try and put yourself smack dab in the middle of Israel during the 1<sup>st</sup> century. At that time, Judaism had much to offer in the way of tangible and material things which made it all seem so real. They had a well defined set of practices and requirements and a long history of very famous people. They would use all of that to validate the importance of everything they did.

They threw out names like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Solomon, and so on. These were important people for sure. The "thickness" of their religious heritage made the Christian concept of "walking by faith in the Spirit of God"

seem like nothing more than made up fairy tales. The Jews thought that their illustrious history combined with the Temple, the sacrifices, the whole army of priests, and so on proved that Judaism was superior to the somewhat mystical teachings of Jesus; and they had no bones about letting Him know how they felt.

In **John 8:39**, they made it clear to Jesus (you can just think for a moment of the audacity of that) that Abraham was their Father and in **John 9:29** that Moses was their great prophet with whom God spoke “mouth to mouth.” Their bravado came from the fact that it was through Moses that the Law of God was delivered to the Jews and it was Moses who led their ancestors to the mountain of God where His visible display was both glorious and frightening at the same time (**Exodus 19**). Again, they believed that all this tradition and privilege validated the Jewish religion as being “the” religion, and they even had the bluster to argue with Jesus about it.

In these opening verses, the Spirit wants these Jewish believers to know that without a doubt even their greatest of leaders could not hold a candle to Jesus. You might be wondering how so. First of all, the Jews can claim that their Father is Abraham, but according to **1:1** Jesus can claim that His Father is none other than Jehovah God. And by the way, He did just that in **John 5:37, 38** and in over 100 other places in the gospel of John alone. So how is that for a trump card? It’s like, “hi; how are you—nice to meet you. What does your dad do for a living?” “Well, my Dad is kind of a big deal. You might have heard of Him. ‘In the beginning God’...that’s my pop.”

Then in **1:3** we have this statement that Jesus upholds the universe by the word of His power. Now this is kind of getting nasty and turning into a street fight.

The Spirit is in essence rubbing it in that their great hero, Moses, could not even carry the burden of 600,000 wonderers much less carry the “universe.” The contrast would have hit hard. Let’s look at a passage in numbers where we find Moses bending, cracking under the strain of it all.

***Numbers 11:11-15***

So Moses said to the Lord, "Why have You been so hard on Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all this people on me? "Was it I who conceived all this people? Was it I who brought them forth, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries a nursing infant, to the land which You swore to their fathers'? "Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me, saying, 'Give us meat that we may eat!' "I alone am not able to carry all this people, because it is too burdensome for me. "So if You are going to deal thus with me, please kill me at once, if I have found favor in Your sight, and do not let me see my wretchedness."

The universe compared to 600,000 people? Hum! Which do you think might be a little harder? The Spirit is saying: I know you think you are all that and have all this great religious history and all, but really come on. Don’t you understand that the best Judaism has to offer is nothing—literally nothing—compared to the majesty of Jesus? Moses could not even deal with this one group of people; yes it was large and all—I give you that—but really “please kill me at once.” Sounds like a little too much P.D. (personal drama). Whereas every second of every day Jesus

deals with every person on the face of this planet as well as with all the details that are required to keep this entire universe working and not blowing apart; and He does it merely by the word of His power. I'm sorry, but Jesus, without question, trumps even Moses.

***Hebrews 1:3***

... After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (ESV)

Now, you may not know it but this phrase is also a slap in the face and is a direct comparison to Moses who had to utilize Aaron, various priests, and multiple sacrificial animals to cover the people's sin during their time in the wilderness, and that was just to gain a temporary fix (as we will find out those sacrifices did not even remove their sin, but merely covered it).

Whereas, Jesus made our sins into something pure and He needed nothing else but Himself to accomplish this amazing feat. This is going to sound a bit weird; but please follow me. The word "cleansed," or in many of your translations "purification," is actually a noun and not a verb. Thus, Jesus—through Himself—took sin (something absolutely horrific and terrible) and made it something that is pure. And He did this so it can never be held against us ever again.

And get this, He did not need to utilize an intermediary or spill the blood of another; but He was enough. As God, He was fully self-contained in this regard. His life was enough. His sacrifice was enough. His blood was enough. He needed

no other. And the work He did was permanent and not temporary as proven out by the fact the issue of sin between man and God is now no longer an issue of sin. Through Jesus we are pure. Mark that truth up as another one for Jesus.

Oh and just let me add that unlike Moses who orchestrated atonement for the nation of Israel, Jesus atoned for the whole world. Again, there is no man that can compare themselves with Jesus and there is no religion anywhere in this world that can even touch that.

The phrase, “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,” is also a direct comparison to all the priests which continually stand ministering in the Temple. We will get into this in detail in chapter 10 but the point is that their work is never done (remember their work only temporarily covered their own sins as well as the sins of others so they had to keep working as they kept on sinning) whereas Jesus’ work has been finished and therefore He can now sit and rest. There is no rest for a priest in Judaism.

Jesus also sits on the seat that no other can even approach—the seat of power and authority (which is the word picture behind this phrase). In ancient times the one who sat to the right of the king exercised all the authority and power of the king and was usually the one who was responsible for administering the affairs of the kingdom. That is Jesus’ chair.

This brings to mind the severe rebuke in **Matthew 23** that Jesus brought against the Scribes and Pharisees (the religious leaders of His day) who seated themselves in the “judgment seat of Moses.” Now there was no literal judgment seat of Moses but it was a word picture. Moses used to have to judge the people during their time in the wilderness and decide all the social and criminal matters

according to the Law. In Jesus' rebuke He essentially said that in their arrogance they assumed this role even though they did not qualify to sit in that seat because they could quote the Law but they did not live according to the Law and they put burdens on men's shoulders that they were not themselves willing to carry.

In contrast Jesus not only carried the full weight of the sin of the world, but with regard to the Law and sin during His time on the earth He was blameless. Which is why He now sits on the ultimate seat of judgment and He will judge not just good or bad deeds, but the thoughts and intentions of all men, women and children who have ever lived or who will ever live. So Jesus is far superior to those who ruled and controlled Judaism because He has the right to judge.

In addition, this is also another jab at Moses because although Moses qualified to sit in this seat of judgment over the nation of Israel, He could not handle the task. Therefore, according to **Numbers 11:16-17**, God raised up 70 men, leaders of the people, to assist Moses in judging the nation. He then took of the Spirit that was on Moses and gave it to them as well so they could bear the burden of the people along with Moses. But Jesus occupies the true seat of judgment and by Himself He will judge people from every nation, tribe and tongue. Even now He hears every complaint, every cry, every plea and He faithfully judges.

It is interesting to note that the ancient Jews fully believed that when the King Messiah did come He would be exalted about Abraham, extolled beyond Moses, and even be loftier than all the ministering angels (which is the next point that the Spirit makes); so their baseline theology about the Messiah was right on. Sadly, their pride and allegiance to religion, to power, to control kept them from recognizing their Messiah when He came.



But with regard to the angels, you have to understand that the Jews highly exalted them because it was through angels that the Law came to Moses (*Galatians 3:19*) and it was through these exalted beings that the Word of the Lord came to so many of their forefathers. Now, they knew that the Messiah would be loftier than the angels but there was confusion as to which rank of angels He would be above. The answer is simple—all of them!

### *Hebrews 1:4*

having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Having the exclusive right and authority to sit at the right hand of the Father, Jesus is, by definition, far superior to all the angels. This is almost a poetic mathematical argument. A is greater than B as C is greater than D. Jesus is greater than the angels as His name is greater than their name. So what name are we talking about? In the context of the subsequent passages the Spirit references the fact that Jesus is called the “Son” but we also know from *Philippians 2:11* that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow.

Now the language here “having become” is a direct reference to Jesus’ time on earth in the flesh as for a little time He was made lower than the angels (*2:7*) because He was found to be in the form of man. But even in His flesh, upon His resurrection, He was exalted to the highest of highs as the name which He possesses is more excellent than theirs (and we will find out why).

Let's get back to the Jewish perspective of angels. Many Jewish leaders believed that the angels were present when man was created and that is whom God was talking to in **Genesis 1:26** when He said: let us make man in our own image. As such, the Jews would even allow angels to be worshiped because of the privileged place which God allowed them to possess as His personal representatives. Thus, in the mind of many Jew, angels were next to God in the ranking of all creation and the angels themselves worshiped no one other than God—for there was nothing else above them that was worthy of worship. With that as our framework let's look at **1:5-13** and do not miss the poetic structure of this beautiful passage.

***Hebrews 1:5-13***

For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"? And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."

Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire." But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."

And, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will

all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end."

And to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? (ESV)

Clearly this was a big issue during their day as the Spirit decided to use 7 examples of why Jesus is above the angels. Now, you might not know it but in the Old Testament angels are referred from time to time as sons of God (**Job 1:6; 38:7**). But not a single one of them has ever been referred to as "the" Son of God or by the Father as "my" Son.

Moreover, the Spirit quotes a string of OT passages most of which would have been understood by the Jews to be a reference to King David and to Solomon (through whom many of the promises to David were fulfilled) but were obviously really a reference to Jesus as David was merely a Biblical type that foreshadowed the true Son of God. For instance, David the man was not going to have an everlasting kingdom but Jesus the man who came in the lineage of David would, as He is the one and only begotten Son of God.

This is so cool. I love the way in the New Testament, the Spirit lets us know that the appropriate and accurate way to interpret the Old Testament is through a complete understanding of Jesus Christ as He is the manifestation of the Word of God to mankind.

**1:5** is a quote from **Psalm 2:7**. Jesus was brought forth or "begotten" by the Father. Now, as we discussed last week, Jesus was always with the Father as He was not derived from God but was God. The idea therefore in this passage is that

according to *Psalm 40:6* (as quoted in *Hebrews 10:5*) Jesus was literally given a physical body by God the Father and then the Father said: “He shall be to me a son,” which is a quote from *2 Samuel 7:14*.

Now when the Father brings His firstborn into the world (*1:6*) He commands the angels to worship Him and in so doing He declares Jesus to be God. Remember, in the mind of the Jew there was no one higher than the angels except for God. So when God the Father places God the Son right there next to Him and demands that He be worshiped He is exalting Jesus as God or else He would be encouraging idolatry which He hates more than almost anything. Check out *Isaiah 42:8*: “I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images.” So we must conclude that Jesus, the Son of God, is God.

By the way, *1:6* is a quote from *Deuteronomy 32:43* and there is also a parallel reference in *Psalm 97:7*. Now if you go look up the passage in Deuteronomy, depending upon your translation, it will probably be a bit different as the author of Hebrews quotes this passage from the Septuagint which was the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. I just mention that so you won't be confused. And just so you know, the Septuagint was well accepted as authoritative by the Jews for many centuries at the time of the writing of the book of Hebrews. In fact, Paul quotes from this same passage in Deuteronomy in *Romans 15:10* which again comes across different in the Septuagint than what is in the original Hebrew text. But more significantly, Jesus Himself also quoted many times from the Septuagint which gives divine blessing on the added portions of those scriptures which differ from the original Hebrew text.

Now this reference to Jesus being the firstborn is about both His birth and His resurrection. In **Luke 2:13-14** we read that the angels were made visible to the shepherds and they were worshiping God for bringing Jesus into the world. But on the day of His resurrection—the day when Jesus’ manhood was united with His Godhood—He was presented to all of creation as the firstborn living Son of God. **Colossians 1:18** confirms that Jesus is the firstborn from the dead so that He will have first place in everything and in **Revelation 4** we see that come to fruition as those in heaven (angels and men alike) obey the Father and worship the Son.

By the way, **Psalm 89:26-27** is a parallel passage to both **Psalm 2:7** and **2 Samuel 7:14** and it reads: “He will cry to Me, 'You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.' "I also shall make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.”

**1:7:** Now, of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire." This is a quote from **Psalm 104:4**. We find that in the scriptures angels are sent by God to do His bidding (**Daniel 9:23**); hence, they are ministers/servants and are therefore subservient to the Son. In addition, they are also subject to whatever form God wants them to take, sometimes like wind and sometimes like fire, sometimes like women (**Zechariah 5:9**) and then again sometimes like men (**Genesis 18:2**). The point of this passage is that the angels, no matter how glorious and grandiose they may be, they are not like the Son.

**1:8:** But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. This is a quote from **Psalm 45:6** and here the Spirit directly equates the Son and God. And the Greek word for “God” is in the vocative tense, which as we studied last week is an emphatic

statement which connects, in this case, the Son and big “G” **God**—not some little “g” god.

Jesus claims this to be true when He says: “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son so He can give glory back to you. For you have given Him authority over everyone in all the earth” (**John 17:1-2**). And “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth” (**Matthew 28:18**). Therefore, unlike the angels who are servants of the living God, Jesus righteously and forever rules as God over all that is seen and unseen. He is the magnificent monarch over all of His all creation. And just to put the exclamation mark on this passage, since we know that only God is good, Jesus must be God if He is able to rule righteously. That is simply something no man or angel is capable of doing.

**1:9.** Once again this point is made when the Spirit quotes **Psalms 45:7** and says: “You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.” God, your God? Yes, this is a direct reference to God the Father anointing the God the Son with God the Spirit. The entire Godhead—the Trinity—is captured in this one phrase.

Now there have been many that were anointed with the oil of gladness—which is a metaphor for the Holy Spirit. Some of these “companions” were Priests, prophets, kings, and so on, but none of them received the full outpouring of the Spirit in the way in which the Son has been anointed. His anointing goes far beyond anyone’s. And by the way, we have no reference to any angel ever being anointed with the Spirit, Just men and the Son of God who loved righteousness and did all that the Father told Him to do (**John 17:4**).

Then in **1:10-12**: we have the Father saying to the Son: And, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end." This is a quote from **Psalm 102:25-27**.

It's as if the Father is just praising Jesus for what He has done. He did it all and as majestic and fantastic as the creation may be, Jesus is going to one day get rid of it and create a new heaven and a new earth (**Revelation 21:1**). It will perish but the Son will remain as He is the same yesterday, today and forever (**Hebrews 13:8**). In contrast, what have the angels created? Nothing, they themselves were created and like men have no capacity to make something out of nothing. But that is exactly what the Son did with His own hands. Now, the reference to hands is just a metaphor for saying that it was the exertion of His' own power by which all things came into being.

**1:13**, "And to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?" The answer is clearly none! This is a quote from **Psalm 110:1**. I love the way the writer emphasizes the point through a question that clearly only has one answer. It's a neat argumentative device and very effective.

7 key comparisons utilizing 7 direct references from the Tanakh (the Old Testament). In other words, Jesus is complete in all ways and is our complete provision and nothing and no one compares.

Now we come to the final, final point on this lesson. The reason they do not get to sit at the right hand of the Father and that position is reserved exclusively for

the Son is because they have been created to serve and not rule. Again, the Spirit makes His point through a question in **1:14**: “Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?” In this final, final point, the Spirit now places men above the angelic order. He makes the point that angels are not like the Son and they are also not like us. After all we are destined to rule right beside Jesus. This would have been a huge pounding gavel of correction in the mind of a Jew who by tradition exalted angels and even worshiped them. Talk about cultural wrong belief and religion gone mad. These people had it all backwards, upside down and inside out.

Angels have been created to minister to you and me—to care for us holy brethren partakers of the heavenly calling.

***Psalm 91:9-12***

Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place—the Most High, who is my refuge—no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. (ESV)

The Lord commands and they obey; the Son commands and they obey and they are His servants to guard and protect us who have been chosen. So make no mistake, Jesus is better than Abraham, Moses and all the forefathers, He is better than the priests, and the entire Jewish religious system and He is even loftier and



far above the angelic hosts who serve Him. Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it (**Hebrews 2:1-2**).

And this leads us into Chapter 2 and sets the tone as to where this study is going to go. We not must drift away from the truth that the one we serve is greater than all others and therefore we should not give our worship and our allegiance to anyone or anything else other than Him.

We will pick up in **2:1** next week.

Let's Pray