
God Revealed

Part 1 - The Final Word

Today we start a new series in the book of Hebrews. Hebrews is a beautifully written complex book that requires we dig into the Old Testament and the New Testament at the same time.

To help with some of the heavy lifting, here's just a few things you can do to help supplement our Sundays together:

1. Read it through so you get a little familiar with the whole book.
2. Prayerfully read through the book in bite size chunks using a devotional guideline and a study Bible.
3. Listen to Riverlife Bible Streams podcast that will be supporting the series that will take a closer examination of the text.

Introduction to Hebrews

Authorship – We don't know who wrote it, but we do know that whoever did has a good grasp on Judaism and writes beautifully with an immense vocabulary of the Greek Old Testament.

Destination – We know that it was written to Jewish Christians, but we don't know exactly who they were or where they were.

Occasion – The letter was most likely written before the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70. It's written in a pastoral sermon style to encourage Jewish converts to Christianity who were going through some really difficult times of persecution with the basic message: "Don't give up – have faith! God is revealed in Jesus."

In part the reason the author is writing to a group of people who have started to revel in despair and frustration, and they have missed out on and shut down the reality of who Jesus is. They are slipping back into the Jewish traditions rather than living in the light of the revelation of who Jesus is.

For us to function in this world rightly – is for us to see Him correctly. And if we don't see Him correctly it affects everything.

The Ministry of Jesus (Hebrews 1:1-3)

In these opening verses we see the three-fold ministry of Jesus. We see Jesus as prophet, Jesus as priest, and Jesus as king. In the Old testament these are three important positions for the people of Israel. The author wants to remind these Jewish Christians that Jesus is 'better than' the best of all these roles in the past.

Prophet

The role of a prophet is to speak to the people to reveal who God is or what God is saying. Jesus is the full revelation of God, He is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being (Hebrews 1:3a).

God has always wanted to have communication with His people. It's His loving response to want to talk to His people. He did it previously through all manner of people and ways, but they all point to Jesus.

Don't neglect the privilege you have of speaking to and hearing from God through Jesus!

Jesus is the ultimate communication of the Father to His people. (John 10:14-15; John 16:12-15; Romans 8:34)

To the first century audience – Why would you turn to an inferior way of hearing from God (past prophets) when you now have Jesus?

To us today – We have this wonderful revelation in scripture that Jesus still speaks to us and Holy Spirit is interceding on our behalf – are you listening? How's your communication with God going? Are you spending time with the heir of all things, the maker of the entire universe?

Priest

The second ministry of Jesus is Jesus as priest, providing for the purification of sins. In the Old Testament the priest on behalf of the nation of Israel would offer sacrifices for the people. In the same way Jesus came to save His people from their sins, and He came to offer a satisfying sacrifice of Himself on behalf of the people.

Jesus purified sins past, present, and future.

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. Hebrews 10:14 (ESV)

This doesn't give us licence to sin (Romans 6:1) rather, we walk in the forgiveness offered to allow God to continue to make us holy, finding our souls more and more set free from the bondage of sin and our lives more and more like Christ.

To the first century audience – Why would you turn to an inferior way of finding forgiveness (sacrificing animals at the Temple), when the ultimate once and for all sacrifice of Jesus has been made? That system is no longer functional! Jesus acts as the great priest who offers a sacrifice of Himself once and for all.

To us today – We all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Jesus' immense sacrifice underlines the utter blasphemy of ever thinking we can pay for our own sins with works of righteousness. There is only one way to purity and that's the blood of Christ!

King

“He sat down at the right of the Majesty on High.” Jesus reigns supreme – there is no other like Him.

From the cross Jesus shouted, “It is finished” (John 19:30) and then He took His seat forever. Sitting down at the right hand of Majesty in Heaven – is a place of all authority – the right hand is a place of honour. (Psalm 110:1; Luke 22:69; Philippians 2:9-10)

And just when you think it can't get any better – Jesus doesn't sit in that place all aloof from His creation but in that exalted place He intercedes for us (Romans 8:34).

To the first century audience – Don't be subjected to any other authority. Don't be intimidated by the authorities of this world.

To us today – Are we prepared to surrender our lives to King Jesus?

Response

Can you see Jesus a little bit more clearly? To see Jesus as He is, demands a response to His offer of purification of sins, to be the king of our lives and to communicate with Him.

What will your response be?

Jesus, you are truly magnificent. I thank you that you have made a way that I might know you intimately by removing the barrier of my sin. I confess that I have lived in a way that hasn't acknowledged that you are the rightful king of my life, you are the Son of God, the exact radiance of God's glory. Please forgive me and purify me of my sin so that I might walk in your way. Fill me with your Holy Spirit that I might see you more clearly in all of your majesty, that I might know and hear your voice so I can be obedient to your ways.

Discussion Questions

1. Read through the whole of Hebrews 1. Spend time looking up the quotes from the Old Testament and discuss how they would both relate to the first century audience and to us today.
2. Discuss the importance of the three-fold ministry of Jesus as Prophet, Priest and King. Personalise these ministries of Jesus to your own life. What difference does it make to know Jesus as Prophet, Priest and King?
3. Put some worship music on, take some time to be in God's presence inviting the Holy Spirit to unveil the image of Jesus to you as you read Hebrews 1:1-3 aloud.