

Journey Into Confident Living

LESSON 1 . . . How God Speaks to Us (Hebrews 1:1-3)

NOTES

The book of Hebrews is about confident living. It was written to Jewish Christians who, because of severe persecution, were losing confidence in the Gospel. Therefore, they were considering turning back to Judaism.

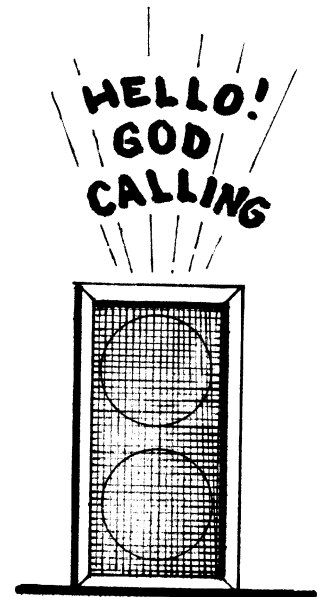
Since the author does not identify himself, as Paul does in all of his thirteen epistles, we don't know for sure who wrote *Hebrews*. Some believe it was Paul. They conclude because it has no salutation like the rest of Paul's epistles, it is one of his sermons rather than an epistle. Others think Apollos wrote *Hebrews*, and still others think Barnabas wrote it. Since the book itself doesn't tell us, only God knows for sure. *Hebrews* was probably written around A.D. 60. The opening verses reveal **how God speaks to us**. First, we discover . . .

God speaks *in many ways* (1:1).

God speaks eloquently to us through creation. Have you ever looked at the stars on a clear night and been awed by the Big Dipper or the North Star? Have you seen the snowcapped Rocky Mountains in Colorado or Montana? Have you ever watched a beautiful Oklahoma sunrise or sunset? Is the awesome beauty, vastness, and precision of creation all by cosmic chance? How does Psalm 19:1 answer that question?

God does powerfully speak to us through creation. However, He speaks to us even more eloquently in other ways. The writer of Hebrews tells us: *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets* (1:1). God spoke to Moses through a cloud and the Ark of the Covenant (Ex 19:9 & 25:22). He spoke to Elijah in a *whisper* (1 Kgs. 19:12). He spoke to Ezekiel through visions and to Daniel through dreams. These *many* different methods reveal God's strong, loving desire to communicate with us. The problem has never been that God doesn't speak to us. The problem is we don't listen. That's why Jesus gives what command in Matthew 11:15?

God still speaks to us *in many ways*. He speaks to me through the Bible, circumstances, spiritual impressions, my wife Virginia, friends, and adver-



sity. **God speaks in many ways.** However, God’s spoken Word is always consistent with His written Word. Next, we find out . . .

God’s final Word is Jesus (1:2a).

The writer of *Hebrews* makes it clear God has given us the final Word, and it is not through a lawgiver or prophet. He writes: *in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son* (1:2a). God’s ultimate medium for speaking to us is Jesus Christ. The phrase *in these last days* refers to the time in which we are living. Jesus is God’s final Word to us. According to John 1:18d, what is the result of God speaking to us through His Son?

The Greek word translated *known*, or “declared,” is the word from which we get our word “exegete” (ex’-uh-gete). The word “exegete” means to interpret or explain. Jesus “exegetes” God, which means He unfolds or explains God to us.

The writer of *Hebrews* continues by telling us **three** important ways Jesus reveals why He is God’s final Word . . .

1. He is the Recipient of all things (1:2b-c).

God *appointed* Jesus *heir of all things* (1:2b). The reason He is *heir of all things* is found in Colossians 1:16a-c. What is it?

It was through Jesus that God *created the world* (1:2c). The word translated *world*, or “worlds,” is not KOSMOS, which is the common Greek word for “world.” The word translated *world* here (AIONAS, i-ohn’-as) is a Greek word from which we get our word “eon.” An eon is an extremely long, indefinite period of time that can refer to billions of years. This means Jesus not only created material things but also time, so His creation continues indefinitely. Things are still happening in God’s time and in His order. That’s why we are not here by accident. God told Jeremiah He knew him before He formed him in his mother’s womb (Jer. 1:5a). What does God also tell him in Jeremiah 1:5b, which is also true of you and me?



You and I are not “cosmic accidents.” For example, consider your eye. It

contains six to seven million charged cones, loaded to fire off a message to your brain when a few rays of light cross them. The cones are so powerful you can distinguish thousands of shades of colors. Have you ever gone to a paint store and looked at all the shades of colors filling their walls? Your eyes can distinguish each one!

All the intelligence, all the PhD's, and all the computer power on this planet cannot create one eye, or anything comparable to it. Yet, some people want us to believe we are "cosmic accidents." I don't have that much faith. Do you? It takes a lot less faith to believe in God than to believe we are "cosmic accidents."



Jesus Christ is the medium through whom God created everything that exists. Therefore, He is the rightful *heir of all things*. Jesus is God's final Word to us because **He is the Recipient of all things** and . . .

2. He is the Radiance of God (1:3).

Jesus is the *radiance*, or "brightness," *of the glory of God* (1:3a). He is not just a reflection of God. Is the light of the moon the same as the light of the sun? Have you ever been "moon-burned"? No! The moon reflects the light of the sun, whereas the sun radiates light because it is the source. Jesus doesn't reflect God; He is the *radiance* of God's glory because He is God in flesh and blood. How does Jesus make this clear in John 14:9c?

Jesus is also *the exact imprint* of God (1:3b). The word translated *imprint*, or "image," (CHARAKTĒR, car-ak-tare') is the word from which we get our English word "character." Jesus is the *exact* representation of the holiness, love, grace, and mercy of God. Jesus doesn't reveal God's physical appearance; He reveals God's character.

Jesus also *upholds the universe by the word of his power* (1:3c). The word *upholds*, or "upholding," is present tense, denoting continuous action. Our universe is not in chaos because Jesus' sustaining power keeps everything on course and in order. Why doesn't Planet Earth ever get too close to the sun? Why don't the planets collide or giant meteors hit us? How does Colossians 1:17b answer these questions?

Jesus Christ is not only the Creator of the universe; He also sustains and maintains what He has created.

Jesus is the Recipient of all things, the Radiance of God, and . . .

3. He is the Redeemer of all people (1:3d).

The writer of *Hebrews* now moves from creation to Calvary and writes: *After making purification for sins* (1:3d). The very same God who spoke the universe into existence chose to come to earth to die on a cross so we could have *purification*, or cleansing, for our sins.

The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). We are all sinners and we can either pay the penalty for our own sins—eternal death—or we can accept Jesus' payment for our sins on the cross. When we admit and repent of our sins, we experience spiritual *purification*, or cleansing. How does Ephesians 1:7 express this truth?

Jesus died on the cross and was buried to pay for our sins. Three days later, He rose from the dead. About forty days later, He ascended into heaven and *sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high* (1:3d). He *sat down* and is today our one and only High Priest. There were no seats in the earthly tabernacle or the temple. Priests could not sit down because their work was never done. There were always more sacrifices for sin to make.

However, since Jesus had made the final sacrifice for all our sins, He *sat down at the right hand* of God. The *right hand* is the side of honor and power. Do you know what God the Father said to Jesus when He returned to heaven? In a messianic psalm, David tells us what *the LORD* (JHWH, YAHWEH or JEHOVAH) will say to his (David's) *Lord* ('ĀDŌN, ah-doan'), the Messiah (Psa. 110:1a). What does God the Father say to Jesus when He returns to heaven (110:1b)?

That means it's not over! When Jesus was standing trial before Caiaphas the high priest, just hours before His crucifixion, He told Caiaphas he would see *the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven* (Mt 26:64b). Jesus is coming back to claim what is His!

Jesus is God's final Word to us because **He is the Recipient of all things, the Radiance of God, and the Redeemer of all people.**

God speaks to us *in many ways*, but **God's final Word is Jesus.**