

THE BEGINNING OF HEBREWS

We are going to turn to the book of Hebrews.

Let's read the first four verses, of the first chapter, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the Word of his power. When he had made purification for sins, He sat down on the right hand the Majesty on high; having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they."

The most important thing the Hebrew writer can say about God is that God has spoken. You notice he begins the letter with the word God. He doesn't give us any introduction. He doesn't tell us anything about God, except the fact that God has spoken. He was very abrupt. He wants us to know that God has spoken. There are many things that he could have said about God. But that's the important thing He wants us to see . . . God has spoken and He continues to speak through His Son. For that reason, we must be sure that whatever we believe, whatever we preach or teach, whatever we practice must be what God said.

Now to me, that is one of the most important aspects of the Christian life . . . Is that what you believe, what you preach or teach, what you want practice is what God has said in His Word. I have little patience with anything that is not found in the Word of God, but if it is in Word of God regardless of our mission and regardless of whether or not we are in the minority on a subject, if God has said it, we had better believe it and practice it. And if God has not said it, if it is not in His Word, we had better not preach or or teach, we had better not believe it, and we had better not practice it.

So here, God has spoken and in the scriptures the voice of God is an awesome thing. It's a horrendous thing to hear the voice of God when He speaks in scripture. And I think we take this for granted alot of times. We think these Old Testament saints just went around talking to God all the time, with God coming down and conversing with like any man would converse with them.

If we go back to the beginning, and especially after man had sinned, now I don't know what it was like before man sinned, but after man sinned, in the 3rd chapter of Genesis, in verse 8, this version says, "And they heard the sound of the Lord God (actually that word "sound" is the word "voice"), And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day . . . now usually we take the cool of the day to be in the late evening and we like to picture God strolling around in garden talking to Adam in the cool of the day. That phrase cool of the day is translated that God is walking in the garden "as the spirit of the day." Not in the "cool" of the day, but as the "spirit" of the day.

Reading on in vs. 8, "and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to the man, and

said to him, 'Where are you?' And he said, "I heard the voice of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."

God came thundering as the spirit of the day into the presence of Adam and Adam was afraid of the voice of God and hid himself. In the book of Hebrews, the 12th chapter, he summarizes us for there the voice of God as it came to Israel in the Old Testament when God was giving the law. If you remember in the 19th chapter of Exodus, before Moses ever went up into the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, God had spoken the 10 Commandments audibly to the people. His voice had thundered from Sinai and the Hebrew writer describes that event in Chpt 12, verse 19, as being, "the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which was such that those who heard begged that no further word should be to them. For they could not bear the command, 'IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED.' And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, 'I AM FULL OF FEAR and trembling.'"

Moses, who had stood in the presence of God many times, when God's voice thundered from the mountain bringing the message to Israel, Moses said, I was afraid, and I trembled. So, the voice of God is an awesome thing. Go on down to vs. 26, "And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, 'YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN.'"

When God speaks to man, it is an awesome sight, it's an awesome thing. And I want to deviate for a few minutes to talk about people who presume to speak for God. We have many people today claiming to have received messages from God in tongues and prophecies and visions and revelations and people running around telling us that God told me so and so, or God said this to me.

Let's go back a moment to read a couple of passages beginning in Deuteronomy 18:18, where he says, "I will raise up a profit from among their countrymen like you (that is like Moses), and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him (that's a prophesy concerning Christ. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to my words which he shall speak in My name, I myself will require it of him." (But now listen), vs. 20 "But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name other gods, that prophet shall die."

Anyone who stood and spoke and said the Lord said to me thus and so, or anyone who stood and said I'm telling you what the Lord said and the Lord had not actually said that, he was to die. vs. 21, "And you may say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?'" He said, vs. 22, "When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him." In other words, he'll be put to death.

Go over to Ezekiel, there is much about this in the old testament about those who would speak for the Lord, Ezekiel Chpt 13, let's begin in vs. 2, "Son of man, prophesy against the

prophets of Israel who prophesy and say to those who prophesied from their own inspiration listen to the word of the Lord!" These men are speaking he said from their own inspiration." vs. 3, "Thus says the Lord God, 'Woe to the foolish prophets who are following their own spirit and have seen nothing.'" vs. 6-7, "They see falsehood and lying divination who are saying, 'THE LORD declares,' when the Lord has not sent them, yet hope for the fulfillment of *their* word. Did you not see a false vision and speak a lying divination when you said, 'THE LORD declares,' but it is not I who have spoken?" vs. 9, "So My hand will be against the false prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations . . ."

We need to be careful whenever we may say, the Lord said this or this is what the Lord said. James 3:1 points out to us that it is an awesome responsibility to teach the Word of God or to preach the Word of God because we will be judged by a stricter judgment. James said, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment." And so, we must be sure that what we believe, and what we teach, what stand for, and what we base our lives upon is actually what God is saying in His Word, and not something that somebody has presumed He said, or what our tradition has taught us He has said.

Back to Hebrews . . . so God spoke, the Hebrew writer said, through the prophets long ago (in other words, in ages past) so God has always been speaking . . . He spoke to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways," but now vs. 2, he says, "in these last days He has spoken unto us through *His* Son . . ." These last days—now there are many passages in the New Testament that talk about the last days. Many people are going around today saying we are living in the last days. I wonder who told them? How do we know we are living in the last days? Well, they say look at everything, it is so wicked, there is so much sin in the world, the events of the last and final things are lining up, we have got to be living in the last days.

Well, look at the wickedness that's always been in the world. Look at the wickedness at the time of Paul and the Roman Empire. It has always been that way. That is no indication we are living in the last days. In fact, the last days in the New Testament usually, not always, but usually refer to the time in which they were writing to these early Christians. It was the last days of the Old Covenant, the last days of God dealing with the Jewish Nation . . . those times were coming to a close.

The second chapter of Acts, vs. 16, when Peter quotes from Joel, vs. 17, "IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS, GOD says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT UPON ALL FLESH OR MANKIND' . . . Peter said this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. Peter said that is being fulfilled now. Peter was speaking in the last days.

But let me read just one passage of scripture on that from **Hebrews Chpt 9, vs 26, he identifies the last days for us** . . . "Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation (or in the completion) of the ages (does anyone have the King James Version . . . I think it says at the end of the world), . . . but now at the consummation of the age, He has been

manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” It was in the consummation, it was in the end of the age in which Christ was manifested to put away sin. And so that is “the last days” that the Hebrew writer is talking about. He has in the last days, spoken unto us through His Son. In the last days of the Old Covenant age, He spoke His final message and He said He has spoken it through...His...Son. So Jesus was God’s Final Word. God spoke His final word through Christ.

Now, notice the latter part of vs. 2 when he describes the Son . . . He’s been appointed heir of all things, it was through Him that He made the world. He created the world through Christ. Vs. 3, he said, “And (His Son, this Christ) He is the radiance of His Glory and (He is) the exact representation of His nature (the nature of God),” not only that, but now He “upholds all things by the word of His power.” It is His word and the power that is in His word that holds this universe together and “upholds all things.” Read on, vs. 3, “When He had made purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,” After He made purification for sins, He ascended, and took His seat at the right hand of God because He has inherited a name which is greater than any name.

Now, if all of this is true about Christ, and I’m sure it is, then His word is final. If He is appointed heir of all things, if He created the world, if He is the radiance of the Glory of God, and if He is the exact representation of God’s nature, and If He upholds all things by the word of His power, if He is the one who made purification for sins, and if He is the one who has inherited the greatest name in the universe throughout all time, then we had better listen to Him. He has something to say to us and His word is final.

Jesus is Bigger than Anything, you see. Therefore, His word is all that we need. We need Jesus and we need His word . . . Look at who He is.

After thinking about these first verses, I concluded God has spoken in three (3) ways. I think they are born out in this text, as we will see.

God has spoken creatively.

He has spoken redemptively.

And He has spoken judgmentally.

These three characters of the Word are seen in these descriptive terms that are applied here to Christ in these first 4 verses. Notice this:

He has spoken creatively . . . vs. 2, “through whom also He made the world.” God spoke creation into existence and it was through His Son that they came into existence. God spoke and Christ created. John says, He made all things and nothing that has been made was made by Him . . . everything has been created by Him. Paul bears that out in Colossians. The emphasis throughout the New Testament is made upon the fact that Christ was instrument of God’s creative Word. Christ was the one who created all things when God spoke them into existence. We may not be able to understand that, but God

spoke and Christ created.

Not only is Christ the creator of all things, but there is another part that is relevant to that, He also is one who upholds all things by the word of His power. He not only created all things, He also controls them. So, He is in control of His creation. And He has created everything, and therefore, He is in control of everything.

Now, if He is in control of this universe, certainly He can take control of my life . . . That's the point, you see. He has spoken to us. We are trusting in a God who has spoken through His Son, and His Son is the creator of all things, and His Son is in charge of all things, He upholds all things simply by His word, and that's the One we are trusting in.

People who can't turn their lives over to Christ and let Him work things out for them have nothing because there is nothing left that is greater than Christ.

I think He has spoken creatively . . . He has also spoken redemptively when He made purification for sins. He offered Himself as the sacrifice for all sin. He made purification for sin . . . the problem that man has faced from the beginning when Adam sinned and will continue until Christ comes back is sin, but Christ settled that problem for those who believe. Christ has made purification for sins, which means He has taken away our sins, He has forgiven our sins, He has opened the way to the Father and we have access to the Throne . . . That is what Hebrews is all about.

The way has been open and we can come into the very presence of God, and the only ones who can come into the presence of God are those who are free from sin. So Jesus took care of that by offering Himself as a sacrifice and made purification for sin in order that we might be accepted before the Throne.

Not only that, it says He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high in order that He might continually intercede for us making His sacrifice applicable to our lives on a daily basis. He didn't just make the sacrifice for our sins and forget about us, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high in order to see that His sacrificial death and offerings were appropriated to our lives.

And so the same thing that saved us is the same thing that keeps us walking in forgiveness before Him. We'll talk about that throughout our study of Hebrews . . . that He has taken away our sin, He has taken away our guilt, He lives to intercede for us.

He has spoken redemptively . . . And He has spoken judgmentally.

Now where do we get judgment out of this? Vs. 3 says, "He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature," And what that has to do with judgment, I think, is seen in the 3rd Chapter of John, and vs. 19 . . . Jesus says, "And this is the judgment" (in other words, this is the judgment that came into the world) He said, "This is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil."

He is the radiance, He is the very light of His glory, He is the exact representation of His nature . . . this is the judgment that light came into the world and when that light came into the world through the radiance and the glory of Jesus Christ, it was a judgment of the world that was laying in darkness.

And He then says, in connection to that, He has been appointed heir of all things. And being an heir is the context of judgment. Psalms 2:8-9, He says, "Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Thy possession." Vs. 9, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, Thou shalt shatter them like earthenware."

He is going to judge the nations and as the judge of the nations, He has been given them as an inheritance. So the fact that He inherits all things, has been appointed the heir of all things, speaks to the fact of His judgment.

God has spoken creatively . . . that's why the scriptures lay so much stress upon God being the creator of the heavens and the earth.

He has spoken redemptively . . . His word brings redemption.

He has spoken judgment . . . He will judge the world by His word.

Now, let us go back to the beginning whenever God first spoke. In the first three chapters of Genesis, there is revealed to us, I think, the way in which the word of God relates to all of life. Anytime you want a pattern for anything that God has ever done in the world, I think you can go back to Genesis and you'll see there the pattern that God has laid out for us.

In Genesis 1:1-2, in the very beginning, it says, "God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters." It was in this context that God spoke. It is then that God said let something begin to happen . . . God said, "Let there be light" and He begins to create out of this chaos, the universe, as we know it. And every time His creative Word said "let there be" . . . there was . . . It came into being. Step-by-step, things spring into being, and out of this chaos, there comes order.

And so the Hebrew writer says in Heb 11:3, "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared or created by the Word of God . . ." God's Word, then, determines the environment in which we live and it addresses all of the circumstances in our life. **There is nothing in our life that is chance.** Even the time in which we are living, the place in which we are living, the environment around us that so many people are concerned about is determined by the Word of God.

Let's take this thought further . . . down in Gen 1:28, after God has created man, God

speaks to man and woman after He had created them, in vs. 28, and God said to them, God, first of all, spoke everything into existence and then He said to them . . . He who spoke the world into being speaks to man. That means God has spoken to us . . . see? God addresses man directly. And He talked to His creation here, He talks to man . . . now note the categories in which His Word falls here.

The first word is a command . . . the first word that God gives to man is a command, He says, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” His command summons them to fulfill mankind’s vocation by ruling over creation.

The basis of our fulfilling the Word of God then is to obey His Word. That’s the first thing that God demands of us when He speaks to us through Christ is to believe Him and to obey Him . . . It is a command -- Don’t ever underestimate what God is commanding us to do.

Then, the second word, down in vs. 29-30, Then God said (after He had commanded them), vs. 29, then God said to them, “Behold (look around you), I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;” vs. 30, “and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to everything that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food”; and it was so.” This is a word of testimony . . . God is saying to man look at what I have done for you. And God explains what He has made for man and how man is supposed to use it.

So, His first word is a word of command to listen to God, and His second word is an explanation of what He is doing in the world, and what He is doing in the life of man and for man. That tells me there is no explanation for life outside the Word of God.

The Word of God explains to us what God is doing in the world and what God is doing in our lives—and we had better listen to that.

God wants us to know what His plan and purpose is for the Church. He wants us to know what He expects of the Church. He wants us to know what He expects of us as individuals. He wants us to know where we came from, and who we are, and where we are going, and what kinds of plans He has for us. And sometimes when we begin to talk about those things we are viewed as being a little radical, you know, because our tradition tells us that all God is interested in is trying to save us and get us away from Satan and carry us off to heaven.

If that is all God wants of us, why did He go to the trouble to do all of the things He has done, and say all of the things He has said in the Word of God? He has a plan and a purpose for every life. And He brought His Church and His Kingdom into existence and put it into the world and He expects a response from it, and He tells us in His Word, He says, This is what I am doing in the world – He explained it to Adam and Eve, and He explains it to us. We need to see it. And we need to understand it.

We aren't just struggling through trying to make heaven our home. We aren't just getting through trials and tribulations. We aren't waiting for the day when God comes and takes us out of it all. He has put us here and He has said I want you to stand in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation and I want you to Shine as Lights. I want you to bring My redemptive power and My message into this world. I want you to influence Kings and Nations. I want you to learn how to Rule. And He says you had better learn . . . because someday you are going to judge the world. And if that doesn't blow you away, He said you are going to judge angels. The 6th Chpt of I Corinthians . . . read it, it's there.

This is a word of testimony, an explanation. Men are trying to find out where we came from, who we are, and why are we here. Back in the 1960s, that was a big thing. Our young people went off to find themselves. Eastern religions invaded us. The Gurus over ran us. People pay thousands of dollars to psychiatrists and psychologists to tell them who they are, and to tell them the meaning of life.

It is all right here in the Word of God—who we are, what we are, what God expects of us, and what life is all about. And if we miss it, we miss it, because it is right here. We are the only ones that have the answers, and sometimes we don't know it. And most of the time, we don't act like we have any answers.

But next, He spoke another word. Go down to Gen 2:16-17, "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.'"

A word of prohibition and sanction . . . He put limits on what man could do. He said you can eat from all of the trees of the garden, except one, you don't touch that one.

There are limits set on the conduct of man. His word sets the limit of our life. What I am saying is there are absolutes in life. There is right and there is wrong, and God's word is the only criteria, the only standard of right and wrong . . . and God sets limits on what we are to do and what we are not to do and what can be and what we cannot be. **It is only in God's word that we find these limits.**

Our society today has rejected the word of God, so they have no limits, no standard of right and wrong, and everyone is like the people in the day of the Judges . . . they do what is right in their own eyes. Modern society says anything that you want to do, if it feels good, do it. If it is alright with you, do it.

But God speaks in His word and he sets limits/parameters.

And finally, after the fall, He speaks again after man has sinned. He speaks the word of promise. His promises are both favorable and unfavorable.

The favorable promise is in Gen 3:15, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman,

And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.” This is the first prophesy of Christ. When God speaks the word of promise, He says He is going to remedy the problem of sin. He is going to punish Satan. He is going to bring a redeemer into the world and undo what Adam had done. A word of promise. And God, being true to His promises, did that.

There were also some unfavorable promises. Vs. 16, “To the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, In pain you shall bring forth children; Yet your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you.’”

Vs. 17-19, “Then to Adam He said, Because you have listened to the voice of you wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you shall eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You shall eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.”

To this, God’s promise was fulfilled.

God’s word of promise was that I am going to redeem you, but in the meantime, all will not be a rose garden . . . there is going to be suffering, and persecution, heart ache, and trials and there is going to be temptations. Paul says all of those who live Godly lives will suffer persecution. But God’s promise is I will not let anything come into your life that you are not able to handle. There is no temptation that you will face that is not common to man. And with every temptation, I will make a way of escape. His promise is I will not put anything on you that you are not able to bear. I will never leave you and I will never forsake you.

But in the midst of it all, it is going to be difficult. That’s His promise.

So that’s what God has spoken. What do we get from all of this?

All circumstances and events in the world are determined by the word of God. Now that is an awesome thought. All events in the world, from the change in the weather, to the rise and fall of nations, is determined by the word of God.

Did you know that the word of God controls the weather? It doesn’t make any difference what the 6:00 news weather forecaster tells you about the weather (usually they are wrong anyway).

Let me read you a passage . . . Psalms 147:15-18, “He sends forth His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly. He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes. He casts forth His ice as fragments; Who can stand before His cold?” Don’t curse the cold and the snow. It is His cold weather. It came as His command. It is His cold and His snow.

Look down at Psalms 148:8, "Fire and hail, snow and clouds; Stormy wind, **fulfilling His word**." You thought spring had come . . . You got up one morning and there was a big frost out there and they were talking about a cold front moving in. Why did that happen . . . because God spoke and told it to happen. He controls the weather, by His word. We are worried about the ozone layer. The environmentalists tell us we are in trouble. How can we be in trouble when the word of God controls everything?

God knows what He is doing in this universe.

He also controls the rise and fall of nations. Go over to Jeremiah for just a moment. This is but one passage. Now He is talking to Jeremiah . . . Jer 1:9-10, "Then the Lord stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, 'Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, To pluck up and to break down, To destroy and to overthrow, To build and to plant.'"

How was Jeremiah going to do that? Go up to vs. 7, "But the Lord said to me, 'Do not say, 'I am a youth, because everywhere I send you, you shall go, And all that I command you, you shall speak.'"

God is saying that My word, which in this instance He is putting in the mouth of Jeremiah, My word controls the plucking up, the breaking down, the destroying and the overthrowing, the building and the planting of nations. Do we understand that? It is God's word that determines what a nation is or is not.

When we are worried about social security, the economy, what is going to happen to health care, my pension, my children going to college, whatever it is, it is good news to know that God is in charge of all of that. And whatever happens in this nation, it happens because God speaks it and His word tells it to happen.