

Hebrews 1:1-4

Two very rich and important New Testament books are [Romans](#) and [Hebrews](#). Both contain incredible theological depth. And after finishing [1 & 2 Peter](#) it seemed fitting to jump into [Hebrews](#) and build on what we gained there. Folks, deception is rampant even in what calls itself the church. And the cure is to be students of the bible. So [my hope is we will come away far richer after this study](#). And for you serious students of the bible, that maybe this will bring to your remembrance things you've looked through before.

- Now, some might ask [why is this book called Hebrews](#) instead of Jews, or Israelites. And is there a difference. The answer (in reverse order) is there's really not a major difference. Paul identified himself as a Hebrew, an Israelite, and a Jew ([2 Cor. 11:22](#), [Acts 22:3](#)). [And all three describe being descendants of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob](#). But the first name to describe his people was **Hebrew**, so maybe that's why [this book has this specific name \(Gen. 14:13\)](#). Just to make you scratch your head a little more, why is the letter written to the gentiles called Romans 😊? It was likely because they were the world empire of the time.
- But do catch this. The book of [Romans](#) addresses the Jews also ([2:17-3:20](#) & [Ch. 9-11](#)). And [the book of Hebrews is incredibly relevant to the gentile believer](#). Not because we somehow become spiritual Israel (that's very poor theology). [But because it's this incredible bridge between the Old and New Testament](#).

The next question is [who wrote this letter?](#) And the truth is there seems to be some debate about that?

- [1](#)) The early church fathers all attributed it to Paul. [2](#)) And Eusebius (AD 263-339), known as the father of church history, ascribed it to Paul.
- [3](#)) Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215) speculated if Paul would have claimed it (being the apostle to the gentiles) many Hebrews, who were prejudiced and suspicious of Paul, would likely have rejected it.

Now, I want to pause there, because no matter who you think wrote it, the author chose to remain anonymous because [1](#) they either believed it would cause some to not read it. [2](#)) Or because they didn't believe their name was all that important. And [I for one think there is an incredible lesson here](#). You and I are to be servants (or stewards) of God. It's not really about us. Now the names of the apostles are going to be on the foundations of the New Jerusalem [because God will put them there \(Rev. 21:14\)](#). But [whoever wrote this book \(which I believe is Paul\), knew that his name was not necessary for this letter. Because the name he wanted the readers to remember was Jesus!](#) When you walk away from a conversation, whose name do you want the other person to remember (see [James 4:10](#))? If its Jesus, then make the conversation about Him.

- And that's exactly the point. Whoever recorded these words was not so important. For **it was God the Holy Spirit who spoke these words**. And He delivered them to the one taking dictation. [Our place is simply to be the secretary through whom He might choose to speak](#). If we have this correct understanding and heart, then we can be assured when He does, the content will be great.

The next question might be: [Why?](#) I mean, what was this letter intended to do? Well, [1](#)) the Jews who were giving their life to Jesus were under incredible pressure from their own countrymen who rejected Jesus, to come back to Judaism or be rejected by them. As a matter of fact, when a Jew gave their life to Jesus, their family would (and often still does) hold a memorial for them because to them they were now dead. So to receive Jesus as the Messiah was (and is) very controversial, even though the early church was predominantly Jewish. [Imagine the tension and pressure](#).

- That's not too hard to do, for many around the world today who come to Jesus must choose between following Jesus, and their family, their vocation, their community, and even their life.
- [2](#)) On top of the internal pressures, the persecution by Rome was ramping up. It is believed Paul would have been in prison in Rome during this time and is backed by the closing of this letter including a greeting which states, "[Those from Italy greet you \(13:24\)](#)". And it is shortly after this that Nero went extra crazy and persecution of Christians (Jews and gentiles) exploded (so pressures from within and from the outside- just like we read about in [1 & 2 Peter](#)).
- So some were considering turning back by either adding the law to their faith in Jesus (but this was to deny the finished work of Jesus on the cross), or a full return to Judaism.

And folks, the predicament they were in is not so different from the mindset of many who have put their faith in Jesus, even today. The enemy plays dirty. And [he will try to get you to turn back by using your family, your](#)

failures, your fears, and every other means he can get you to grab onto. **Don't turn back.** You might not be a Hebrew, but you will find plenty of reason and encouragement to stay the course in this letter.

Now if you were a Hebrew and had come to put your faith in Jesus as the fulfillment of the Law, and were under all these pressures, you would likely want to figure out, or come to more deeply understand, **1)** where and how the OT spoke about Jesus. **2)** And how it verified Jesus' claim. **And you will see that in this book God certainly provides that!** But, as I said earlier, **3)** in doing so, it delivers incredible insight of how the Old Testament **shadows and types** were pointing to their fulfillment in Jesus coming (8:5, 9:8-12, 9:23-24, 10:1).

- Dr. Pentecost (BTW-what an awesome name when you're a bible teacher 😊) says there are 86 close connections or quotations from the OT in the book of Hebrews.
- Grok breaks it down to this; **1)** 35 direct quotes, **2)** 34 allusions, **3)** 19 summaries of OT material, and **4)** 13 mentions of OT names and topics. Which equals 101 connections to the OT (only outdone by Matt. [almost three times as long word for word] and Rev. [almost twice as long]).
- And what that also establishes is this super-connector of Christianity to the Old Testament. And for all of us who interpret the bible more literally, it also gives us a road map to the pieces of Gods plan which **have not occurred yet.**

Folks, there are so called bible teachers out there who are trying to tell the church that the Old Testament is not for the believer today. That's absurd. It's misguided. It's not biblical. It's deception.

And the last piece we are going to cover before actually reading some of Hebrews 😊 is what I would call the **grand theme** of this letter to the Jews who had put their faith in Jesus, but because of persecution might consider turning back to the Law and temple sacrifices. And that is that **Jesus is superior to anything that they had been introduced to before.** Because **all that came before was pointing to Him (Heb. 10:7);** He being the ultimate fulfillment! We will come back to this today (and the other things we have already addressed) with more detail.

¹ *God* (now we really see who the author is. And in one form or another in this letter it tells us God is speaking 61 times. He is the author), *who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,* ² *has in these last days* (the end of the ages- when Jesus came [9:26]) *spoken to us by His Son,*

Now we often think of the prophets only in terms of those who spoke during the times of the kings of Israel (Isaiah-Malachi), **but the Jews to this day still consider Moses to be the greatest of the prophets (Deut. 34:10-12).**

- And if you are a student of the bible, you know that **God did some unique things with the prophets** in order to get His message across. **1)** He spoke to Moses through a burning bush (Ex. 3), **2)** to Hosea by having him marry a woman of Harlotry to show Israel their harlotry and His faithfulness (Hosea 1:2), **3)** to Ezekiel He said shave your head and beard with a sharp sword and then divide the hair into thirds, burn a 1/3, drop a 1/3 on the ground and strike around it with the sword, and scatter the last 1/3 to the wind (all related to the coming Babylonian siege)(Ezek. 5:1-4). That's about as *various* as it gets 😊. Yet if time permitted, there are many more examples we could choose from.
- So God makes it clear here that **1)** He is not bringing new revelation about Himself and His plan of salvation through others (there are no more prophets needed regarding these things), because He has fulfilled His plan by **2)** having sent Jesus, *His Son*, to speak all that He (the Father) would give Him to speak (John 8:28, 12:49). And on the Mt. of transfiguration God then says of Jesus "*This is my beloved Son. Hear Him (Luke 9:35)*". And I don't think God forgot to say anything He want to convey to us. But far more important is that **Jesus not only brought the message of the gospel, He was the message and fulfillment of it!**
- For the Jew who was being pressed as to if they really believed in Jesus as the Messiah (especially when persecution and separations from their families was resulting), these past prophets and fathers had a real draw to them. **But if they didn't see how each of them was pointing toward the One which God would send into the world to save it, this would be a draw backward, not forward.** So throughout this book God is going to help them see the connection to what they grew up in and how it was not some kind of mistake, but rather like a roadmap or compass leading them to Jesus.

If you have never seen these connections before, I am excited for you. What God has produced for you, and is in your hands, is **nothing short of divinely inspired.** And the more you study it **and make the connections yourself, the more enamored with Him and your bible you will become.**

^{2b}whom He (the Father) has appointed (Jesus) heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds (literally “the ages” [eons]);

There are two incredibly powerful aspects of Jesus given here. The first is that in Him coming into the world to die for it, God has appointed Jesus the heir of everything that has ever been created. And I for one am so glad that this reward goes to Jesus and not some governmental body, special interest group, or world leader. Because only God (and Jesus is God- which will be made abundantly clear by God next week) is 100% righteous, pure, holy, perfect in love, and love itself.

- And let me show you why this is relevant. Because everything we just talked about in His nature is revealed to us in that other powerful book of Romans we spoke about earlier. Romans 8:16-17 speaks to us, saying “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him (and they were), that we may also be glorified together.” It’s all His. And because we have put our faith in Him, His nature causes Him to want to share it with us, together with Him in heaven forever.
- But wait, there’s more. Not only is He the heir of all things, through Him all things were created (John 1:1-3, Col. 1:16, 1 Cor. 8:6). I told you next week we are going to clearly see God the Father declare Jesus is God. But you don’t have to wait until then. And there’s even more today in the next verse! Now admittedly, the triune nature of God is something we all need to gasp, and yet something none of us can fully understand. But to dismiss this reality would require you to destroy your bible. There is One God in three distinct persons. **And Jesus is God!**
- For the Jew who had come to Jesus this was a vital understanding they needed to lay ahold of. Because you can’t receive Jesus as less than who He is. And to see how the OT laid the foundation for what the Messiah must do and be to once and forever blot out our sins, **He must be God come in human flesh.**

And for those of you who like to geek out on apologetics, you are in luck, because along with many other topics, Hebrews is going to address creation several more times (1:10-12, 2:10, 3:4, 4:3-4, 11:3).

³ who (speaking of Jesus) being the brightness of His (the Father’s) glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Wow! There is so much crammed into so few words here (again, not a gift I have 😊). First, I promised you more in terms of God the Father verifying that Jesus is God, and here it is. Now Col. 2:9 says of Jesus; “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily...”. He is the express image of God, because He is God (John 14:9). We can radiate or reflect God’s glory as we cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit, and continue to abide in Christ, but we will never be God(s). Jesus has always been God and can never stop being God. He has just added humanity to His deity, making it possible for the glory of God to be seen by mankind (more to come on this next week).

- Next we come to understand the reason all created order still exists is because Jesus is holding it together. But there’s more to it than even that. Do you remember in verse 2 when speaking of Jesus also making the worlds, that the literal translation was “ages”? Well here Wiersbe tell us it more literally means Jesus is “holding and carrying from one place to another”. He is the God of creation and the God of providence who guides this universe to its divinely ordained destiny”. The point being that 1) Jesus came at the right time to fulfill the Law and validate God’s plan of salvation. 2) And He will come again at the perfectly ordained time to remove His children. 3) And at the perfect time to judge the earth. 4) And at the perfect time to establish His kingdom. **Because Jesus is guiding this Universe to its divinely ordained destiny. And Jew or gentile, if this is true (and it is) you can put your full confidence in Him.**
- Next we see that Jesus needed no help in purging our sin. As a matter of fact, He had to do it by Himself. No one else was qualified to do so!

And even if there was another, do you understand how unimaginable it is that a sinless, all knowing, all powerful God would do what our God did? Think about it from God the Father’s side. If anyone treated your son the way fallen humanity treated Jesus, what would you have done? Would you give your son to them, for them? Now think about it from Jesus’ position. As they were spitting on you, mocking you while you were in the worst pain of your life, and continuing to inflict more injury, would you have asked the Father to forgive them and not have called down the angels to wipe all humanity out? Well, Jesus, in that pain, instead fulfilled

the prophecy of [Psalm 22:1](#) (go read that if you want to be blown away), crying out “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me* ([Matt. 27:46](#))?” Seriously, who else would be willing and able?

- And finally, here we see once Jesus had purged our sin, He then ascended to be with the Father and *sat down*. This is all so significant for us but would have really spoken to the Jew who was familiar with the sacrificial system bound to the Law. For there was nothing that once and forever purged their sin. In the temple there were no chairs for the priests because *their work was never done*. But what is being brought to their attention here is Jesus’ sacrifice was **better** than those of the Old Covenant which were simply to point them to a coming reality of when Messiah would come and once and forever purge them of their sin *and then sit down because the work had forever been finished!* And they (we), after seeing Who He is, knowing that He is guiding us along on our journey to heaven, can have complete confidence in Him!

⁴ having become so much better than the angels, as He (Jesus) has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Next week we are going to come back to this topic of **1)** Jesus being *better* than the angels, and we will discuss that in depth. Then God will go on to show how Jesus is **2)** better than Moses, **3)** the unfulfilled rest Joshua spoke of, **4)** and the priests and their temporary sacrifices which only covered unintentional sins.

- But as we close out today, I want to leave you with a list of “better things” this book speaks of, which are all because of Jesus coming into the world as the fulfillment of what God had spoken of in the OT.

1:4 – As we just read, concerning Jesus, He is “...*so much better than the angels*...”

6:9 – Encouraging them (us) he says, “...*beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you*...”

7:19 – And they (we) have “...*a better hope*...”

7:22 – “...*Jesus has become a surety (the guarantor) of a better covenant*.”

8:6 – And, “...*He is also Mediator of a better covenant*...”

8:6 – “...*which was established on better promises*.”

9:23 – “...*with better sacrifices*...”

10:34 – Which delivered to those who receive Jesus, and were enduring loss, while standing together in persecution, “...*a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven*.”

11:16 – And just like the OT believers who suffered extreme losses, we, “...*desire a better, that is, a heavenly country*...”

11:35 – And for those who would suffer for their faith in God, He brought the promise of “...*a better resurrection*.”

11:40 – Comparing them to the OT saints who died without seeing the coming of the promised Messiah, God has provided, “...*something better for us*...”

12:24 – And we hear of “...*Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel*.” Abel’s blood cried out for justice. Jesus’ blood declares you, “justified”!

Folks, Jesus is better than anything that has come before. *And with Jesus, everything is better*. Even from what we just read, we know that does not mean everything in this life is easier. But we know without a doubt it is better.

- There are so many who have not come to Jesus but are looking for something better than what they have and see in the world. But there is nothing better than Jesus! As a matter of fact, without receiving what Jesus has done for you, things can at the best only get temporarily better before they become permanently and eternally worse.
- If you are truly looking for **something better**, **it can be found nowhere other than Jesus**.
- And it is my hope that this study in the book of [Hebrews](#) will also be an encouragement for all of us to never allow the pressures and difficulties of this life to cause us to look back, or to something else, even for a second.