

Hebrews 003

Christ's Completeness

Hebrews 1:1-3

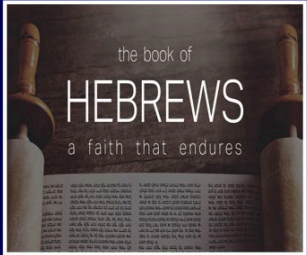
May 3, 2026

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I want to welcome you to our study that we started a couple of weeks ago. This is lesson number three on the Book of Hebrews. Let's jump right in and talk about some background issues.

INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

- **Authorship**
- Audience
- Date
- Occasion
- Purpose
- Message
- Outline



This is a review slide, but the Book of Hebrews is one of those books with which the better you understand the background of the book, the better you will understand the contents of the book. And that is true, by the way, with any book of the Bible, but it is particularly true with Hebrews.

These background issues are critical towards interpreting the book. That is why we are spending some time here. What we have covered thus far is the first background issue, authorship of the book. Who wrote the Book of Hebrews? Was it Apollos? Was it Barnabas? Was it Paul? Those are the three major candidates for the authorship of the book.

You will notice a question mark after each candidate. The reason there is a question mark after each candidate is that for everyone you suggest as the author of the Book of Hebrews there are problems. There are arguments pro and arguments con. So the bottom line is that we really do not know who wrote the Book of Hebrews. I agree with Origen on the issue. He said, "Only God knows."

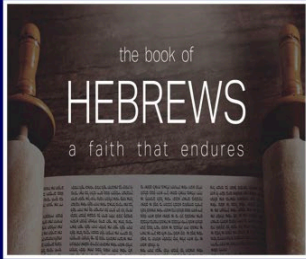
The author of Hebrews wanted to be anonymous, and I respect the author's anonymity. I do not spend a lot of time on this background issue. Some people do. But the reason I do not is that whoever wrote the Book of Hebrews does not have any bearing on how the book is interpreted. If Apollos wrote it instead of Barnabas, or if Paul wrote it instead

of Barnabas, it has zero influence on how the rest of the book is interpreted. So I pass by this background issue relatively quickly.

Let's get to our second background issue: the audience of Hebrews. Now this is where you want to spend your time, because what you believe about the audience of Hebrews controls how the book is interpreted, particularly the warning passages, which we referred to before, and which I will refer to again in just a little bit.

AUDIENCE

- Believers (1:3)
- 2nd generation (2:2-3)
- Jews
- Located in the Land of Israel



But what do we know about the audience of Hebrews? We know four things. Number one, they are believers, regenerated, born again. In our first lesson we spent a lot of time here, because what you believe about this has a bearing on how those warning passages are interpreted, as I will explain. So not only is this a regenerated, born-again audience—this is not a mixed audience of believers and unbelievers—but also they are second-generation Christians. They are a generation removed from Christ.

The chain went from Christ to the apostles to this generation. So this is not the apostolic generation. This is the generation that followed the apostles, as we have explained. So they are a little bit weaker, which is always true with the second generation. They are a little bit weaker in the things of God than the first generation. So they are more susceptible to the temptation to return to the temple, as we will explain.

Number three, the audience of Hebrews is Jewish. They are Hebrew Christians, Messianic believers: Jewish people who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

Number four, the audience of Hebrews is located in and around the land of Israel. That is very significant because some Jews went into the Diaspora around this time. Others remained close to Jerusalem, which is where this group is. That is very significant because the audience of Hebrews were being tempted to return to the temple, which they were living near. So that is the best we can do with this whole subject of audience.

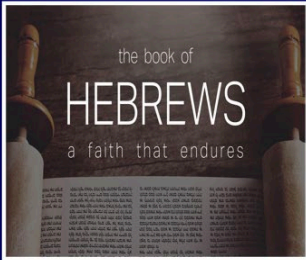
Going to our third background issue, we talked about the date of the book. When was the Book of Hebrews written? A safe date for the book would be about A.D. 62 to 64. As I said, this is the second generation of Christians, so we cannot push things too early.

You cannot push the date much earlier than A.D. 62. But at the same time, as we have talked about, the temple was still standing.

There are many, many references in the Book of Hebrews to the standing, functioning temple. That means the Book of Hebrews was written prior to A.D. 70, because we know historically that the temple was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. And since the temple is functioning and standing, this must have been written before A.D. 70. The temptation to return to the temple, therefore, for this audience, was something very real. So I think a date of about A.D. 62 to 64 is a very safe date for the composition of the Book of Hebrews.

OCCASION

- A.D. 70
- Heb 3:1 (Christian confession)
- Unbelieving Jews placing audience under duress to return to Judaism
- Audience being worn down
- Temple still standing



From there, we moved into our next background issue, which is the occasion of the book. What is the crisis behind the scenes that the author of the Book of Hebrews is addressing? A.D. 70 was coming. God was about to bring discipline upon His elect nation, as He obligated Himself to do all the way back to the Mosaic Covenant at Mount Sinai when the nation went astray.

The audience of Hebrews was living during a time period when national Israel has rejected her Messiah as King, and God was about to bring discipline upon His elect nation, which would manifest itself, this time around, in the Roman invasion of the land of Israel under Titus of Rome, resulting in the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70.

So what the Hebrew Christians were trying to seek refuge in to avoid persecution was about to be swept away with violent fire, as the temple itself would catch on fire. Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, tells us that the gold in the temple would melt and ooze down in between the stones, or the bricks, of the temple and dry there.

The greedy Roman soldiers, in order to get their hands on the gold, would take the temple apart brick by brick, stone by stone. Jesus spoke of this coming incident very frequently. Matthew 24:1-3 was one instance.

So, A.D. 70 was right around the corner. And this is an audience who, because they were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, had made a public confession of Christ.

Hebrews 3:1 talks about their confession. What was their confession? It was their baptism.

In their baptism, the Hebrew Christians were publicly making a statement concerning their newfound faith in Jesus Christ. They were communicating that national Israel was wrong in their rejection of Jesus, or Yeshua, as their King, and the infant church, which had started on the Day of Pentecost, was correct and was right in their acceptance of Jesus as their personal Savior, the very Messiah that the nation of Israel rejected.

So once the Hebrew Christians were baptized, they were publicly identifying with the church and rejecting the decision of the leadership of national Israel. So when that happened and the Hebrew Christians made that public stand (which happened through their baptism or their confession, which I think is referenced in Hebrews 3:1), the unbelieving Jews did not like that message at all.

So the unbelieving Jews were placing these believing Jews under extreme duress to renounce their confession and return to the institutions of Judaism. This resulted in perpetual persecution. And these Hebrew Christians were being worn down through this perpetual persecution. They were a bit weaker than the prior generation, because this was the second generation. They were tempted to just return to the temple, return to the feast festival system, return to the institutions of Judaism.

Why? To get these unbelieving Jews who were persecuting them off their backs. "We are tired of being ostracized. We are tired of being cut off from our friends and our family. We are tired of being cut off from our business connections (which were common in the temple and in the synagogue). We are tired of this.

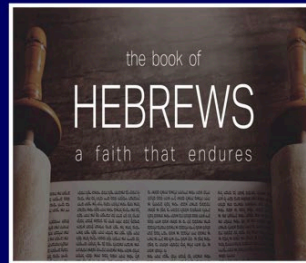
"We want to get these unbelieving Jews who are persecuting us, who do not like our confession, off our backs. So you know what? We will just retrogress backwards. We will go back to the temple. We will go back to the sacrificial system. We will go back to the festival system. And in the process, when we syncretize Christianity with Old Testament Judaism, we will avoid persecution."

This was a very real temptation because the temple, as I mentioned before, pre-A.D.-70, was still standing. So that furnishes the occasion for the Book of Hebrews, which takes us to our next background issue, which is the purpose of the book. The purpose of the book deals with the why question "Why was this book written? What was the literary impact that this book was designed to have by the author (whoever the author was) on the original audience, these Hebrew Christians?"

So notice this purpose statement of the book. The purpose of the book is to be an encouragement to not retrogress backwards into Judaism. Hebrews was an encouragement or a motivation to stay with Christ and not go back to an inferior revelation.

PURPOSE

- Encouragement/motivation to not lapse back into Judaism
 - What believers already have in Christ is superior to every vestige of Judaism (Angels, Moses, and the Aaronic priesthood)
 - Warnings



Now, do not get me wrong—the institutions of Judaism that this group was seeking to take refuge in were not bad. They were good because God gave them. But what the audience of Hebrews had in Christ was far better. That was the point that the author was making. The word "better" is used thirteen times in the Book of Hebrews.

So this is not a mandate to not regress into something bad, because the institutions of Judaism were not bad. But if you go back to the institutions of Judaism, you are going back to a shadow. A shadow simply foreshadows a coming reality. The shadow is not the reality. The reality that the shadow foreshadows is the reality, but the shadow itself is not the reality.

All of those institutions of Judaism that we read about in the Old Testament were a prefigurement, if you will, of a coming final reality, which is Jesus Christ. So the point of the Book of Hebrews is "Do not go backwards into an inferior system." And the author communicates that by telling the Hebrew Christian audience that what believers already have in Christ is superior to every major vestige of Judaism.

So what we need to understand is that Old Testament Jews, Hebrews, revered angels because angels, in the Old Testament, were the messengers of God. In fact, Daniel received the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks (Daniel 9:20-27) from none other than the angel Gabriel. Angels are messengers in the pages of the Old Testament.

So if the author of Hebrews can show that Jesus is higher than the angels, he can show that Jesus' message is higher than any message that we find in the pages of the Old Testament. So the author says, "Do not lapse backward because Jesus is higher than the angels."

Now, the author of Hebrews also shows, in the book, that Jesus is higher than Moses. The Jews revered Moses because he was the law giver. So if the author can show that Jesus is higher than Moses, he is showing that Jesus is higher than a major vestige of Judaism, the Mosaic Law. So do not regress and go back into the Jewish legal system.

And then the Old Testament Hebrews also revered the Aaronic priesthood, the whole priestly system that came from Aaron. To be a priest in Old Testament times, you had to be not just from the tribe of Levi, but you also had to be a descendant of Aaron.

It is from that system, that we read about in Leviticus, which started all the way back at Mount Sinai, that there came, for 1,500 years, the Aaronic priesthood, with its animal sacrifices and everything associated with it. So the author of Hebrews is showing that Jesus is higher than Aaron, because Jesus is orchestrating a priesthood that is superior in comparison to the Levitical priesthood.

And if the author can show that Jesus is now orchestrating a higher priesthood, Jesus is higher than Aaron. And because Jesus is higher than Aaron, and because believers now enjoy a priesthood higher than the Aaronic priesthood itself, there is no point in retrogressing backward into the Aaronic priesthood.

So this is what the author of Hebrews does. This is how he communicates his point not to retrogress back into Judaism, because what believers currently possess is superior than any of those institutions have to offer: Jesus is higher than the angels; Jesus is higher than Moses; Jesus is higher than the Aaronic Priesthood.

Secondly, the author of Hebrews uses warnings to show that if you retrogress backwards, something bad is going to happen to you. So these are times in the Book of Hebrews when the author will interrupt his train of thought, which is very logical, and he will interject some kind of warning: "If you retrogress backwards, something negative is going to happen to you." So these warning passages appear five times in the Book of Hebrews.

WARNINGS

- 2:1-4 – Warning against drifting
- 3:7-4:13 – Warning against disobedience
- 5:10-6:20 – Warning against immaturity
- 10:26-39 – Warning against despising the truth
- 12:25-29 – Warning against denying the truth

These are five times when the author interrupts his train of thought and issues a severe warning. We have the warning against drifting (Hebrews 2:1-4), the warning against disobedience (Hebrews 3:7-4:13), the warning against immaturity (Hebrews 5:10-6:20), the warning against despising the truth (Hebrews 10:26-39), and the warning against denying the truth (Hebrews 12:25-29).

So here the author is building his case throughout the book that Jesus is higher than the angels, higher than Moses, and higher than Aaron. In other words, it is illogical to leave what you have now and retrogress backward, as the audience was being pressured to do.

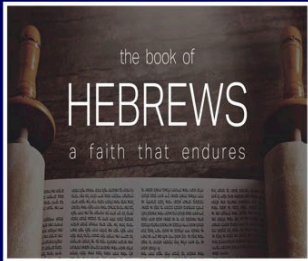
But then the author goes a step further and will disrupt his train of thought and issue a severe warning. And then once the warning is completed, he will get back on the trail there and continue his train of thought in terms of logic, and how Jesus is higher than angels, Moses, and Aaron.

So this is how the Book of Hebrews is structured. It is a logical book, but there are five times when the author stops his train of thought and issues a severe warning.

Now, how do we interpret these warning passages? You can see that there are four ways to interpret these warning passages, and this is where audience analysis starts paying big dividends. This is why we spend so much time on "Is this audience a saved audience or an unsaved audience?" because that controls how these warning passages are presented and taught.

4 VIEWS ON WARNING PASSAGES

- Hypothetical
- Arminianism
- Calvinism/Reformed
- Loss of blessings



The first view is the hypothetical view. This is the view espoused by Charles Ryrie, and it is the idea that God is warning the Hebrews with a very severe consequence, but it is just hypothetical. We know that this consequence could never really happen in real time—it is so severe. So that to me is a very strange interpretation, because what is the rhetorical impact of a threat if the threat is not real?

If your boss says that you have to do "x," "y," and "z" or you are going to be fired, but we know you cannot be fired, what is the point of the threat? So I reject out of the gate this hypothetical understanding.

The second view (Arminianism) says that these warning passages are aimed at believers. So the Arminians have that part right. But the Arminians believe that the warning passages are dealing with the loss of salvation. These are people who are saved but retrogressed and are not saved anymore. That is the Arminian view. And I

reject that view because there are other passages of Scripture such as John 10:27-29, which teach eternal security: once saved, always saved.

The third one down there is probably the view that has the dominant market share today. It is taught by all of the Calvinists, with very few exceptions. Calvinism is known by the acronym TULIP: Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints.

What the Calvinists mean by that last one, the "P" in the TULIP acronym, is that if you do not endure till the end of your life in faith and good works, then you were never saved on the front end. You are a mere professor of Christ, but not a possessor of Christ.

So what the Calvinistic, Reformed view teaches is that interspersed into the audience of Hebrews are unsaved people, and the warning passages are aimed at those people only. Now, that is a big problem, because, as we demonstrated in our first lesson together, the audience of Hebrews is a saved audience. So this idea that some are unsaved within the audience of Hebrews is something that I do not think can be demonstrated from the biblical text itself.

So I reject the Calvinist/Reformed view. By the way, if you tell your flock or your congregation that, "Look, these warnings do not apply to you as a Christian; they only apply to potentially unsaved members in the audience," then the people that you are teaching will just mentally check out and say, "You know what? This does not affect me. And so let me know when you are finished with the warning and you are back onto the logical flow of the book."

But if you tell people, "If you retrogress backwards, something really negative is going to happen to you that really is unrelated to heaven or hell, unrelated to whether your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life or not, but it is a consequence of a temporal nature that you, as a Christian can experience," which is how I am understanding these warning passages, then you will have everyone's attention in your flock.

They will understand that there are consequences associated with retrogression that really have nothing to do with one's ultimate arrival in heaven (heaven or hell issues). So therefore, with all that being said, the view that I embrace is called the loss of blessings view, which says that these folks (the audience of Hebrews) are being threatened with a loss of blessing flowing from their justification.

But when they lose the blessing, it has nothing to do with their eternal destiny as a child of God. Yet it is a very real consequence that they could experience. So that is how I think we should understand these warning passages in Hebrews. These warning passages are not dealing with saved-unsaved issues, but consequences that Christians experience.

Let's take David in the Old Testament as an example. David was saved. If you say that David was not saved, that is a problem, because he wrote most of the Psalms in the Psalter, and you have an unsaved person writing all of those Psalms, which would not make any sense.

But David made a decision to rebel against God. He committed adultery with Bathsheba. He had Bathsheba's husband, Uriah the Hittite, murdered. He spent a lot of time covering up his crimes. And David, during that time of disobedience, suffered a lot of consequences that had absolutely nothing to do with his ultimate arrival one day in heaven.

So that is the kind of thing that is being presented here with these warning passages in Hebrews. These are real consequences that believers will experience, but they do not have anything to do with heaven, hell, justification, and those kinds of issues.

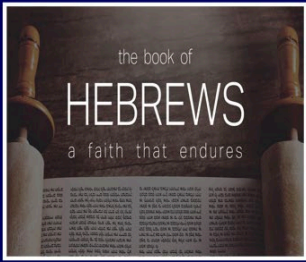
So with all of that being said, I am embracing the loss of blessings view as a way to understand these warning passages in Hebrews. And I reached that conclusion because of what we did in our first week together, that the audience is clearly regenerated. So that pushes me in the direction of the loss of blessings view.

So where you want to spend your time is "What do you think the audience of Hebrews is: saved or unsaved or a mixed audience?" Do not spend a lot of time with authorship, because authorship does not have any bearing on how the Book of Hebrews is interpreted. But the audience has everything to do with how the book is interpreted. And I am pushed in the direction of the loss of blessings view, because an analysis of the audience indicates that these folks were clearly regenerated.

So if that is the purpose of the Book of Hebrews: "Do not regress backwards because Jesus is higher than the angels; He is higher than Moses; He is higher than Aaron. And if you regress, something very bad can happen to you." That is the purpose of the Book of Hebrews.

MESSAGE

- The superiority of the full revelation of Christ in comparison to OT Judaism is shown through Christ's superiority to every major vestige of Judaism, and the author wrote Hebrews so that his audience would not lapse back into Judaism.



Then what is the message of the Book of Hebrews? The message relates to "What is the book about?" So here is my message statement for the Book of Hebrews. (And you can actually develop a message for every book of the Bible.)

Here is the message of the Book of Hebrews: the superiority of the full revelation of Christ in comparison to Old Testament Judaism. This is shown through Christ's

superiority to every major vestige of Judaism. And the author wrote the Book of Hebrews so that his audience would not lapse back into Judaism.

So what is the Book of Hebrews about? It is about how what the audience of Hebrews has in Jesus is higher than anything the temple system has to offer. And since Jesus is higher than anything that the temple system has to offer, do not regress backwards.

So that becomes the message statement of the Book of Hebrews. Furthermore, the author wrote Hebrews so that his audience would not lapse back into Judaism. That relates to the purpose of the book. That is what we talked about a little earlier.

The immediate rhetorical impact that the Book of Hebrews was designed to have on the original audience was the superiority of the full revelation of Christ in comparison to Old Testament Judaism, written so that the audience would not lapse back into Judaism. This is so important.

I remember Howard Hendricks, one of the great professors at Dallas Seminary, talking about how he was invited to speak as a guest speaker at a church. He contacted the leadership and said, "What would you like me to speak on?" And the leadership there said, "You can speak on anything, but do not talk about the Book of Ephesians."

And Howard Hendricks said, "Well, what is wrong with talking about the Book of Ephesians?" And the leadership said, "Our pastor has spent five years leading us through the Book of Ephesians, and he is still in it." And Howard Hendricks responded to those lodging this complaint, "Well, what is the Book of Ephesians about?" And they had no idea.

Not a single person could give Howard Hendricks an airtight message statement of what the Book of Ephesians was about. They knew parts of the Book of Ephesians, but they did not know how it contributed to the whole.

One of the weaknesses in modern day Bible study is that we can spend so much time studying the veins on the leaves of the trees that we forget what the forest looks like. When we do that, we lose sight of the message of the book. So that is why you need to have a message statement for every Book of the Bible. You need to be able to step back and say, "Hey, what is this book about?"

With Ephesians it is easy. It is about the believer's wealth, Ephesians 1-3, leading to their walk, Ephesians 4-6. You can do this with Galatians, Romans, the Thessalonian books, any book of the Bible. So that is what we are doing here with Hebrews. We are coming up with a message statement for the book. This keeps us out of the weeds.

Studying the weeds and the details, of course, is very significant and very important. But you do not want to spend so much time in myopia land that you forget what the big picture looks like. So what is the big picture, therefore, of the Book of Hebrews?

It is the superiority of the full revelation of Christ in comparison to Old Testament Judaism. And this is shown through Christ's superiority to every major vestige of Judaism. And the author wrote Hebrews so that his audience would not lapse backward

into Judaism. So when you come to things in the Book of Hebrews when it is tempting to look at little details, do not lose sight of the big picture. Your message statement will help you with that.

OUTLINE

- I. Doctrinal section (1:1–10:18)
 - A. Christ's attributes (1:1-3)
 - B. Christ is superior to the angels (1:4–2:18)
 - C. Christ is superior to Moses (3:1–4:13)
 - D. Christ is superior to Aaron (4:14–10:18)
- II. Practical section (10:19–13:25)
 - A. Exhortations and pastoral reminders (10, 12, 13)
 - B. Hall of faith (11)
 - C. Benediction (13:20-25)

So with all of that being said, what is the outline of the Book of Hebrews? The first larger major section of the book is doctrinal. It goes from Hebrews 1:1-10:18. This section has four parts: number one, Christ's attributes (Hebrews 1:1-3), which we are going to study today; number two, Christ is superior to the angels (Hebrews 1:4-2:18); number three, Christ is superior to Moses (Hebrews 3:1-4:13); and the largest section in the doctrinal section—Christ is superior to Aaron (Hebrews 4:14-10:18).

Then, as is common in books like this, epistles like this, you hit the word "therefore." And when you see the word "therefore," you have to ask yourself the question, "What is the word 'therefore' there for?" And typically it is to swing us out of doctrine, orthodoxy, into practice, orthopraxy—to switch us out of knowledge, or "gnosis" (γνώσις), into what the Hebrews called "hakma" (חֵכְמָה) and the Greeks called "sophia" (σοφία), which is knowledge applied.

So if you look at Hebrews 10:19, you will see the word "therefore." Hebrews 10:19 says,

"Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus," (Hebrews 10:19).

So now we are leaving doctrine, and we are moving into practice, where the author is explaining what he wants his audience to do with all of the information that he has developed in the doctrinal section. So you have in Hebrews 10, 12, and 13 a whole bunch of pastoral reminders and exhortations not to lapse backward into Judaism.

Then you have the Hall of Faith, Hebrews 11. Now this is the chapter that most Christians gravitate towards. It is the chapter that Christians know the best. But most people do not understand what the Hall of Faith is doing in the Book of Hebrews. How does the Hall of Faith Hebrews 11 contribute to what the author is seeking to accomplish in terms of his overall goal of exhorting his audience not to lapse backward into the temple system?

Well, the author of Hebrews is giving example after example after example—and many are covered here: Abel, Moses, Abraham, people from the Judges era, people from the Joshua generation, etc. Isaiah, although not named, seems to be referenced in Hebrews 11. I will show you that when we get there.

All these people are referenced as examples of those who walked with God despite the pressure to depart. They believed God when the whole system around them was telling them not to believe God. They trusted God when the whole system of the world around them was telling them not to trust in God. So Hebrews 11 is a record of those positive examples that we can draw from, of people who trusted God, who walked with God despite the pressure of persecution.

The author of Hebrews is saying, "Follow their example. Follow their example, and do not retrogress backwards." And that is why Hebrews 12:1 reads the way it does. It says,

"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us," (Hebrews 12:1).

Who is this great cloud of witnesses surrounding us? I have heard a lot of sermons on this. Some people say these are the angels. Some people who believe they are dead people—necromancy. One pastor in particular that I am thinking of has moved into necromancy because he thinks his son who died (and I feel very badly for him on that account) is one of these great cloud of witnesses communicating to him in his life, and he is communicating to his son.

So you have all these interpretations as to who this great cloud of witnesses is. Is it angels? Is it deceased loved ones? But just keep it in its context. This followed the Hall of Faith. And so this great cloud of witnesses is all of those mentioned in the Hall of Faith, and they are actually in heaven rooting for us not to retrogress backwards. Their lives serve as positive examples (Hebrews 11) of those who did not retrogress backwards.

So that chapter (Hebrews 11) that most Christians are familiar with is found in the practical section of the Book of Hebrews. And all I am trying to do here is insert it back into the central thrust of the book and the argument of the book, helping us understand why that chapter is even there in the first place.

And then when you drop down to subletter "c" under the practical section, the Book of Hebrews ends with a concluding benediction, Hebrews 13:20-25. So that becomes a bird's eye view, if you will, of what the Book of Hebrews is about.

In terms of the introduction to the Book of Hebrews, we have covered authorship, audience, date, occasion, purpose, message, and outline. And you can do this really with any book of the Bible, not just the Book of Hebrews. And this kind of work is so important to better appreciate, as I said before, the contents of the book.

So with that in mind, let's jump right into the outline here and let's see if we can cover in this session the first part of the doctrinal section, Christ's attributes. Notice what Hebrews 1:1-3 says, as the author is seeking to deter his Hebrew Christian audience from retreating into the institutions of Judaism so as to avoid persecution.

The author writes there in Hebrews 1:1,

"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 at the right hand of the Majesty on high," (Hebrews 1:1-3).

So the writer begins Hebrews 1:1-2a by simply explaining that Jesus Christ is superior to any previous Old Testament revelation. Old Testament revelation was indirect, it was incomplete, and it was temporary. By contrast, the revelation now provided in Jesus Christ is not indirect but direct. It is not incomplete, but complete. It is not temporal, or temporary, but permanent.

In other words, you have the final say in Jesus Christ. He is the final act. There is no further revelation after Him. Now it is true that other books of the Bible would be written, but they revolve around this Man, Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament is the preparation for Jesus Christ. The Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are the manifestation of Jesus Christ. The Book of Acts is the propagation of Jesus Christ—how the message of Jesus Christ reached the world. The epistles, or the letters (Paul wrote 13 of them and then there are eight general letters in that section of the Bible), and the seven letters to seven churches (Revelation 2-3) are the explanation of Jesus Christ. The Book of Revelation is the consummation of Jesus Christ.

So everything in the Bible revolves around Jesus Christ. The Old Testament is preparation, the Gospels are manifestation, the Book of Acts is propagation, the epistles are explanation, and the Book of Revelation is the consummation of Jesus Christ. But after Jesus Christ there is no further revelation, even though other books about Jesus are destined to be written.

So therefore, what the readers of Hebrews have in Jesus Christ is the final revelation. Everything prior to that was to be a shadow of a coming reality. The audience of Hebrews had the coming reality. They had the reality, therefore the shadow, and retreating to the shadow, was foolishness. And that is the point that the author is making there in Hebrews 1:1-2a.

Now look at Hebrews 1:2 very carefully. Hebrews 1:2 reads in English as follows:

"in these last days has spoken to us in His Son..." (Hebrews 1:2).

Now when you study Hebrews 1:2 in Greek, what it literally says is, "in these last days has spoken to us in Son." And that particular English translation, the New American Standard Bible (1995 update), does not reflect what the Greek says very accurately and very appropriately in this regard, in my opinion. In Greek, Hebrews 1:2 literally says that God has now spoken to us in Son.

Jesus is the final revelation of God. There is nothing beyond Him. And so since you have the final act, why would you go back to something that is merely preparatory for Jesus Christ, which, by the way, is about to be swept away in the judgment of A.D. 70? So that is another reason why it is foolish to go back to that system of Judaism. "Do not retrogress."

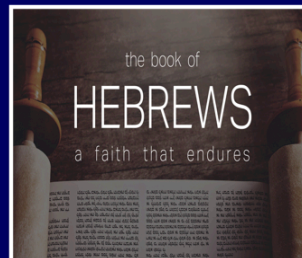
Here is Hebrews 1:2b-3, which says this:

"...whom [Jesus] 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 of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:2-3).

Now, what the writer of Hebrews is doing here is revealing seven attributes about Jesus Christ, showing His finality. In fact, here in Hebrews 1:2-3 is a list of the seven attributes of Jesus, showing that He is the final act.

CHRIST'S 7 ATTRIBUTES SHOWING HIS FINALITY (1:2B-3)

- Heir of all things
- Maker of all things
- Brightness of the Father's glory
- Express image of the Father
- Upholds all things
- Made complete purification for sins
- Sat down at the Father's right hand



And since Jesus is the final act, why would you retrogress backwards into a revelation which, at the time, was good, but you have something in Christ which is far better? In other words, it is not rational; it is not logical; as the writer is explaining these things to the Hebrew Christians. It is not logical or rational to retrogress backward simply to get these unbelieving Jews off your back.

So let's take a look at these seven attributes, demonstrating the finality of Jesus Christ. Number one, Jesus is the heir of all things. Now look at what it says in Hebrews 1:2:

"...whom He appointed heir of all things,..." (Hebrews 1:2).

Now what does that even mean—He is the heir of all things? What it means is that Jesus is the one who will exercise complete and total authority in the Millennial Kingdom one day. So Jesus is not some kind of high-level manager. He is the inheritor of the entire enterprise, and He is the one who will exercise complete and total authority over the earth, the enterprise which is the Father's, in the Millennial Kingdom itself. And that is who Jesus is. He is the heir of all things, demonstrating His completeness and finality.

Look at the second of these seven. Not only is He the heir of all things, but He also is the Maker of all things. Here is how it reads in Hebrews 1:2:

"...through whom also He made the world" (Hebrews 1:2).

Now, the way the Greek reads is better translated as "He is the one that orders the ages." He is the one that spoke, and the heavens and the earth themselves leapt into existence. Let me give you some cross-references to this, other Scriptures which communicate this same point. Notice John 1:3. John the Apostle writes of Jesus,

"All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (John 1:3).

Here is another cross-reference found in the Book of Colossians. Colossians 1:16 says,

"For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16).

So who is this Man, Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ is the one who spoke, and the heavens and the earth leapt into existence. Now, not if, but when the Jehovah's Witnesses come to your door, they will try to convince you of a heresy as old as Arius in church history. They will try to convince you of the Arian heresy: that Jesus Christ is a created being.

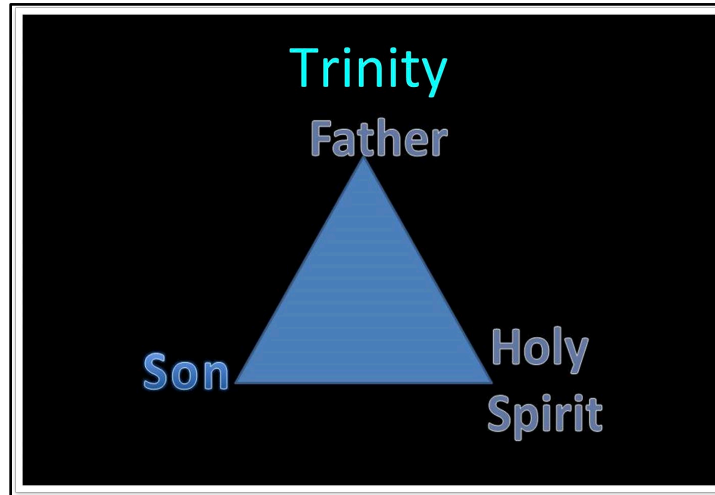
The Jehovah's Witnesses refer to God the Father as the Master Creator, who created Jesus. And then Jesus in turn created everything else. And that is heretical. That goes against the Creed at Nicaea (A.D. 325), which indicates that Jesus was begotten. He was unique, for sure, but not made—begotten, not made. Jesus is the uncaused Cause. Jesus is the one who has always been. There never was a time in which He was not.

And if you start to look at Jesus as some kind of created being, then whether it is coming from the Jehovah's Witnesses, or whoever, you are recycling the ancient heresy of Arianism, taught by Arius, that Jesus was some sort of created being. The fact of the matter is that Jesus is not a created being. He is the opposite of a created being. He, in fact, is the Creator Himself. He is the Maker of all things, as the Book of Hebrews tells us.

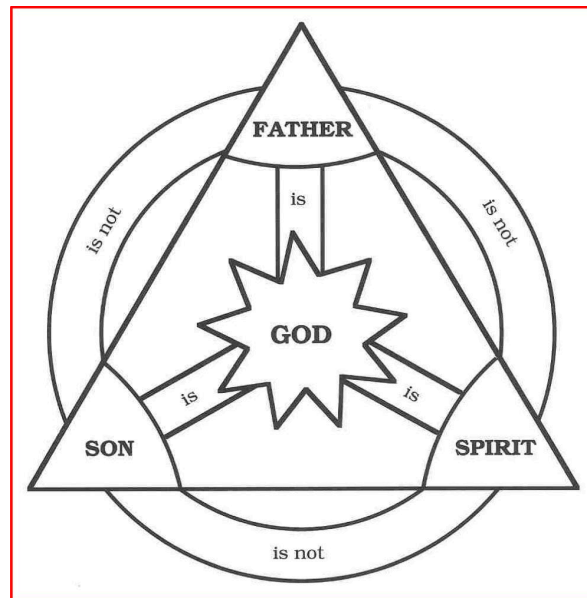
What else do we know about Jesus concerning His finality? We come here to number three: He is the brightness of the Father's glory. And notice where this appears. Hebrews 1:3 says of Jesus,

"And He is the radiance of His glory..." (Hebrews 1:3).

Now, what exactly does that mean? He is the one who has enjoyed eternal oneness with the Father.



Notice this screenshot of the Trinity, our Triune God. One God has expressed Himself in three separate personages: God the Father, sharing with God the Son in the essence of deity. But the Father is unique in His Fatherhood. The Son is unique in His Sonship. The Spirit is unique in his Spiritness. Yet all three share in the same essence of deity.



So in that eternal arrangement, which has always been, God the Son enjoyed complete and total unity and fellowship with God the Father. That is what the Book of Hebrews is talking about in Hebrews 1:3, where it says,

"And He is the radiance of His glory..." (Hebrews 1:3).

Now take a look here at John 17:5. This was Christ's final prayer as He was getting ready to die on the cross. This is a section that we call "the real Lord's Prayer." If you are looking for the Lord's Prayer, or what Jesus Himself prayed, read His High Priestly Prayer in John 17. That is the Lord's Prayer. That is what He Himself prayed prior to His death.

What Jesus gives us in Matthew 6:9-13 is not the Lord's Prayer. It is the disciples' prayer, as Jesus was teaching us how to pray. It is not His prayer. It is Him teaching us how to pray. And one of the lines in the disciples' prayer is "Forgive us our trespasses" (paraphrase, Matthew 6:12; Luke 11:4). That cannot be something that Jesus prayed, because Jesus had no trespasses.

So if you want the Lord's Prayer, you have to study John 17 to get that. This is Jesus' High Priestly Prayer. And one of the things He prays is right there in John 17:5. He says,

"Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (John 17:5).

Jesus prayed for a return to that preincarnate glory, that preincarnate fellowship with God the Father, that He experienced and enjoyed throughout eternity, prior to the Incarnation, the virgin conception at which humanity was added to eternally existent deity and Jesus became the God-Man and lived amongst us. And during that time period, Jesus continued to enjoy fellowship with God the Father. But at the point of the cross, He became the sin bearer.

Second Corinthians 5:21 says that He who knew no sin became sin on our behalf. He became the sin bearer, the sin offering. And at that point, there was a disruption in the fellowship that Jesus had experienced with God the Father. But that disruption was momentary. It was restored after the ordeal of the crucifixion had passed.

And what Jesus is praying in John 17:5, in what really is the Lord's Prayer, is for a return to that preincarnate glory that he enjoyed with God the Father throughout the ages prior to becoming the sin bearer at the point of the cross which disrupted the fellowship between Himself and God the Father. So that is what the Book of Hebrews is talking about when it says in Hebrews 1:3,

"And He is the radiance of His glory..." (Hebrews 1:3).

Jesus is the one who has always enjoyed eternal oneness with the Father, which was temporarily disrupted at the point of the cross. Jesus prayed in what we truly call the Lord's Prayer for the restoration of that fellowship once the ordeal of the cross had passed. So this is who Jesus is. And obviously nothing mentioned in the Old Testament could rise to this level. That is the point that the author of Hebrews is making.

The fourth thing to understand about Jesus that demonstrates His finality is His fourth attribute listed in Hebrews 1:1-3: Jesus is the express image of the Father. He is the heir of all things, the Maker of all things, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the

express image of the Father. Now where do we see this in Hebrews 1:3? There it is, right in the middle of the sentence:

"And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature,..." (Hebrews 1:3).

Jesus is the exact representation of the nature of God. Now, notice John 1:14. John talks about this. John says,

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father,..." (John 1:14).

"Only begotten" is a translation from "monogenes" (μονογενής), meaning "one of a kind."

"...only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

So the fact of the matter is that man cannot understand God. Man cannot have a concept of who God is, because God is God—omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent—and man is finite. So how can man understand God? The answer is that He cannot, unless God becomes man, which happened in the person of Jesus Christ. And John therefore says, "We saw His glory—I saw the glory of the Father, something that I really could not understand on my own, in the incarnate Christ."

Because who is Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ is an exact representation, a replica, if you will, of God the Father. This is what the author of Hebrews is pointing towards. Notice John 1:18. John says,

"No one has seen God at any time;..." (John 1:18).

Well, why not? Because God is God—He is unlimited—and man is man. But then John goes on in John 1:18, and says,

"...the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him" (John 1:18).

Now that word for "explained" is "exegeomai" (ἐξηγέομαι), from which we get the word "exegete." If you are an exegete, you are not the text of the Bible, but you are trying to derive the meaning of the text. That is who Jesus is. He is not the Father in the sense that the two are one, in the sense that there is no distinction of personhood between the Father and the Son, because there is a distinction.

But at the same time, Jesus is a representation, an exact representation of the Father, in the sense that He explained the Father to man by becoming man Himself. In other words, God the Son exegeted the Father. So that is who Jesus is, and that is what the Book of Hebrews is speaking of here when it says that Jesus is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His nature (Hebrews 1:3).

Jesus, therefore, is the exact representation of God the Father. He allowed man to see and understand God in a way that Old Testament revelation could never do. And so

since you have that full revelation of the Father in the Son, the point that the author of Hebrews is making is, "Why would you leave that and retrogress backwards into an inferior revelation?"

Can I give you a few cross-references on how Jesus is the express image of the Father? Notice Colossians 1:15, which says,

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" (Colossians 1:15).

Then you have John 14:8-9, which is a conversation recorded in the Upper Room between the disciple Philip and Jesus Himself.

"Philip said to Him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:8-9).

So in that conversation, Jesus is claiming to be the express image of the Father Himself. That is what makes Jesus the highest revelation. And John says that man could not grasp God—could not see God—could not understand God. How many verses in the Bible will God say things like, "No man can see me and live" (see Exodus 33:20)? Man, without this manifestation of Jesus, cannot see God, and cannot understand God.

But the moment that Jesus became man and added to eternally existent deity humanity, leading to His virgin conception and therefore His virgin birth, was the moment that the issue of man not understanding God was solved. So Jesus therefore became an express image of God the Father Himself.

And why bring up all this Christology? Just to write a systematic theology textbook? No, it is to demonstrate the foolishness of the decision that the Hebrew Christians wanted to make in terms of retrogressing backward into a mere shadow, which was supposed to foreshadow a coming reality.

Notice what J. Dwight Pentecost says in his excellent commentary on the Book of Hebrews, which I recommend to you. He says,

"The fourth statement is that the Son is 'the express image of His person' (1:3b). This emphasizes that the Son in Himself is a full and perfect revelation of what is in the Father. Even though we have not seen the Father, we know the Father because all that is in the Father is in the Son. In the Greco-Roman world, coins bore the image of the emperor. Because the image of the emperor had been impressed on the coin by a die, by looking at a coin one could recognize the emperor. And though the likeness of the emperor on the coin was only a representative likeness, if the die were cast away, one could determine exactly what was in the die by studying the coin. Why? Because the die reproduced itself in every detail on the coin. This is the essence of the word the author chose here

to show the relationship between the Son and the Father. While we do not see the Father, all that is in the Father is in the Son. By studying the Son we learn of the Father. Just as an impression on a coin becomes an expression of the die, so what was in Christ is a revelation of the Father."¹

So what we have in Jesus is the final revelation. The fifth attribute of Jesus listed in Hebrews 1:1-3 that demonstrates His completeness and finality is that He upholds all things. Notice where this appears. Hebrews 1:3 says,

"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..." (Hebrews 1:3).

Jesus is not only the one who created all things, but He is also the one who currently upholds all things. Can I give you a cross-reference? Notice Colossians 1:17. It says,

"He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17).

So is Jesus the Creator? Yes. Is He the one who spoke, and the heavens and the earth leapt into existence? Yes. But He is also the one who is sustaining and upholding Creation even as I speak. He is the one who kept our hearts beating and our respiratory systems working so that we could even wake up this morning, because He is the one who is sustaining Creation.

You look at our heliocentric solar system, and the planets revolving around the sun—what prevents the planets from colliding with each other? Jesus prevents that, because He did not just create the solar system, but He is also the one that upholds it and sustains it. Those who are involved in science tell me that there is an energy or a force at work in our bodies, preventing our atoms and molecules in our bodies from dispersing from each other, from breaking away from each other. There is some kind of force of energy.

Well, what is that energy holding the atoms and the molecules of our bodies and of matter together? I think I know the answer from Hebrews 1:3. It is the sustaining power of Jesus Christ, because Jesus is not just the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He did not only speak the heavens and earth into existence ex nihilo (something out of nothing). He is the sustainer of the cosmos, and He upholds all things by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3).

A sixth attribute of Jesus demonstrating His completeness and his finality as surfaced in Hebrews 1:1-3 by the author of Hebrews is that Jesus made complete purification for sins. Notice what Hebrews 1:3 says. It says,

"When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3).

¹ Pentecost, J. D., & Durham, K. (2000). *Faith that endures : a practical commentary on the book of Hebrews* (Rev. ed., p. 47). Kregel Publications.

Let's focus for just a minute on the fact that Jesus made complete purification for sins. When you go into the Old Testament system, on Yom Kippur, the "day of covering," the blood of the sacrificed animal was applied to the mercy seat.

What did that transaction on Yom Kippur do? It is all described in Leviticus 16. It postponed the note of indebtedness for a year. You do not have to pay for a year. "Cover"—"Kippur." God will cover the sins of the nation for a year. Well, then the next year they had to come in and do the whole thing all over again, because what happened on Yom Kippur did not completely eradicate sin and the sin debt. It covered the note of indebtedness for a year.

Yom Kippur was always a day of trepidation because as the Israelites were involved in this ritual, they always wondered, "Well, maybe this is the year when the Lord will not postpone the note of indebtedness, and we are going to be accountable for sin. Maybe God will kick the can down the road again for another year. Maybe He will not."

But that is what happened on Yom Kippur. Compare that to Jesus, who did not come into the world to continue this system, but in fact, came into the world to completely eradicate the sin problem altogether. Let me give you an example of this. Let's say you take out a large sum of money from somebody and you come back before the person who loaned you the money.

So someone loaned you money and you have to make payments, and the first payment is due. You make the payment. The second payment is due. You make the payment. The third payment is due. You cannot make the payment. And so you go before the person who loaned you the money and you say to them, "I need an extension," and they grant you an extension, and then you make the next payment and the next payment.

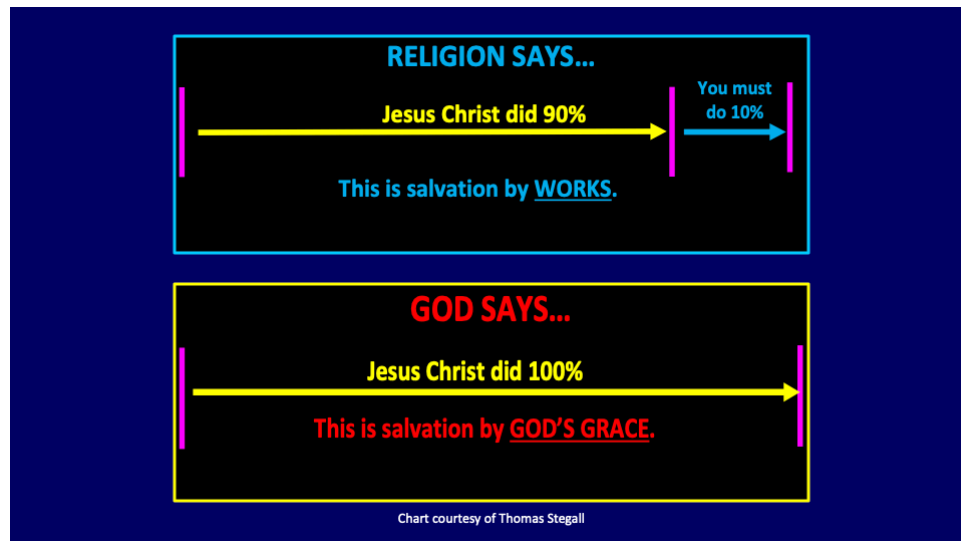
But then the opportunity to make another payment arises, and you cannot make the payment. So you have to go back before them, and you have to say, "I cannot make the payment this time around." And they give you an extension. That is Yom Kippur. And every time you go back in front of the person who loaned you the money, you are always worried: "Maybe they are going to not give me the extension this time around."

So what happened at Yom Kippur was that the note of indebtedness was postponed for a year. The can was kicked down the road just for another year. Now, let's say you go before the person who loaned you the money, and instead of saying to you, "I am going to postpone the note of indebtedness for a year," they say to you, "let's just cancel the principal, and let's pretend as though you never borrowed the money at all to begin with."

That is the difference between Yom Kippur and what Jesus Christ accomplished. Jesus does not just kick the can down the road and postpone the note of indebtedness for another year. He cancels the principal. And that is what the author of Hebrews is getting at here in Hebrews 1:3, where it says that Jesus made purification for our sins.

Jesus' final words on the cross were, *"It is finished!"* (John 19:30), meaning "paid in full" ("tetelestai" [τετέλεσται]), which is an accounting term found all over the Greco-Roman world. It was a stamp that was embedded on notes that had been paid in full.

That is what you have in Jesus. You do not just have a postponement of payment. What you have is a cancellation of the principle. That is what the author of Hebrews is communicating when He says that Jesus made a purification for our sins (Hebrews 1:3).

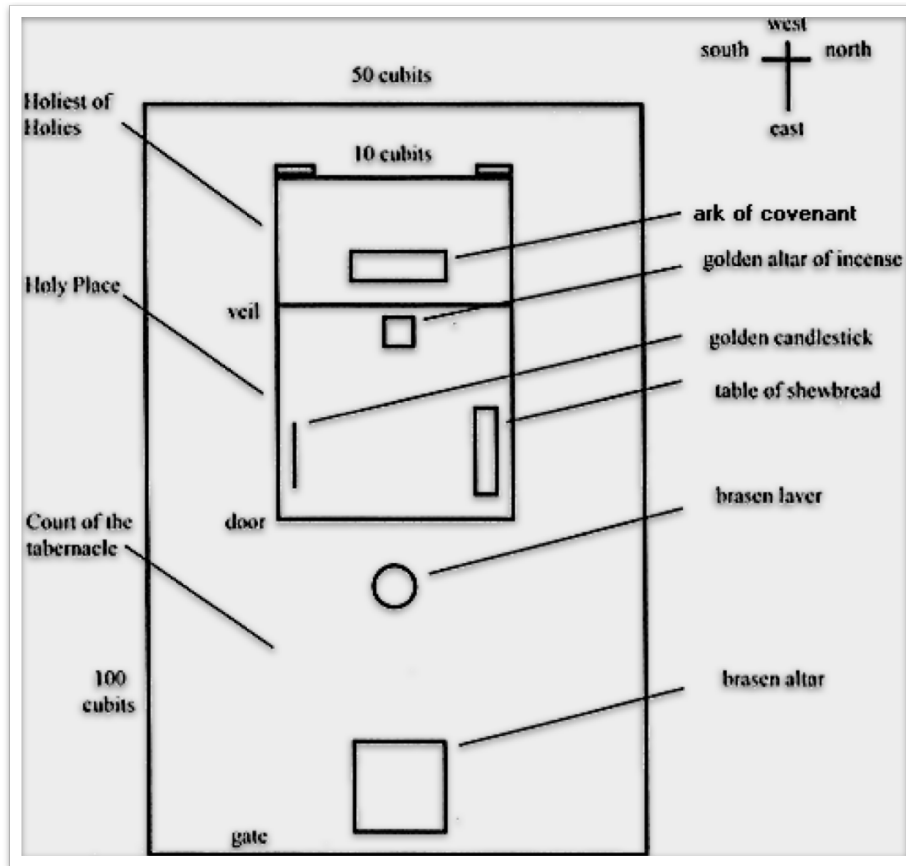


Notice this chart here from Tom Stegall. He is comparing what God says versus religion. What does God say? God says that Jesus Christ did one hundred percent, and you receive that by grace through faith as a free gift. That is very different from what the world of religion says. The world of religion says that Jesus did ninety percent, and you kick in the ten percent. So what you have in Jesus is not the top square (see chart above), but the bottom square.

And that is what the author of Hebrews is saying when he tells us that Jesus made a complete purification for our sins (Hebrews 1:3). So if that is true, why would you want to regress and go back to a system (Judaism) in which the note of indebtedness was simply covered for one year, and then the next year you had to go through the whole ritual all over again? So these are just logical statements showing, or demonstrating, to the audience of Hebrews the foolishness of this decision that they are contemplating concerning regression back into the institutions of Judaism.

Let's take a look at our final attribute of seven of Jesus Christ from Hebrews 1:1-3, showing His finality and His completeness. Number seven: He sat down at the right hand of the Father. Notice where this shows up in Hebrews 1:3. It says,

"...When He had made purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high," (Hebrews 1:3).



Now take a look at this slide here. This is the tabernacle furniture. Lots of furniture in the tabernacle is described in vivid detail in Exodus—the gates, the walls, the Most Holy Place, the outer court, the veil, the door, the brasen laver, etc.—all of that is described in great detail in terms of furniture. What is a piece of furniture that you do not see in the tabernacle? A chair. Lots of furniture in the tabernacle is described, but never a chair.

Now, why is that? Why is there no chair in the tabernacle? Because the priest's job in that tabernacle system was never finished. It was never complete. So the priest never sat down on the job, because that would mean that his job was complete. And that is why you have no chair whatsoever in the tabernacle.

Now, compare that to what the author of Hebrews is saying here: that Jesus sat down following his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension back to the Father. His first order of business was to sit down at the right hand of the Father. He sat down, because the work of eradicating the sin debt of the world was complete. That was something an Old Testament priest could never do, because an Old Testament priest never sat down on the job. That is what the author of Hebrews is communicating here.

Christ's Three Offices

1. Prophet – 1st Coming (Matt. 4:17)
2. Priest – Present Session (Heb. 4:15)
3. King – 2nd Coming (Isa. 9:6-7; Matt. 25:31)



And when Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Father, He entered His present session. The three offices of Christ are Prophet, Priest, and King. He functioned as Prophet in His First Coming. He will function as King in His Second Coming. But the moment He ascended to the Father and sat down at the right hand of the Father was the moment He began His middle office, which is not the office of King, which is yet future, but the office of Priest.

And Jesus is not just any priest, but a priest after the order of Melchizedek, which, as the author of Hebrews is going to show, is a priesthood much higher than Aaron's priesthood that these Hebrew Christians were thinking about retrogressing back towards.



Now notice this map here. It has Laodicea circled. Laodicea is one of the seven churches in the Book of Revelation. And this is what Jesus said to that church in Revelation 3:21 (and as I read this, tell me how many thrones you see here),

"He who overcomes, I will grant [future tense of "didomi" (δίδομι)] to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down [aorist tense of "kathizo" (καθίζω), meaning that it has already happened] with My Father on His throne" (Revelation 3:21).

So you have the throne of the Son, yet future—a throne that He will reign on one day from Jerusalem on the earth. The throne that He is on now is not the Son's throne, but the Father's throne. That is the throne Jesus sat down on along with His Father. And it is from that throne that Jesus now orchestrates something called his present session, or the high priestly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice Revelation 12:5, describing what happened following the ascension of Jesus. It says,

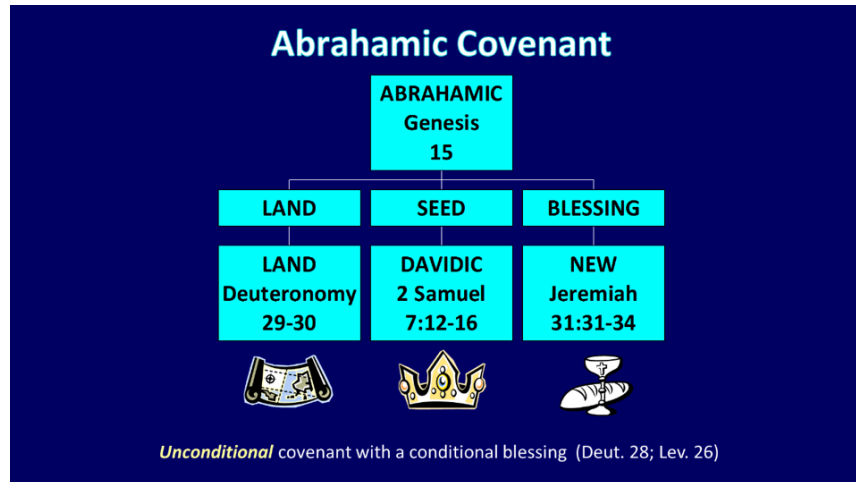
"And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child [Jesus] was caught up to God and to His throne" (Revelation 12:5).

So where is Jesus Christ now? He is on not the son's throne on Earth, which is yet future, but He is on the throne of His Father in heaven, and from that throne He currently functions not as the Davidic King. He will do that one day. But He functions as high priest after the order of Melchizedek—His present session, in other words, not to be confused with His Davidic reign.

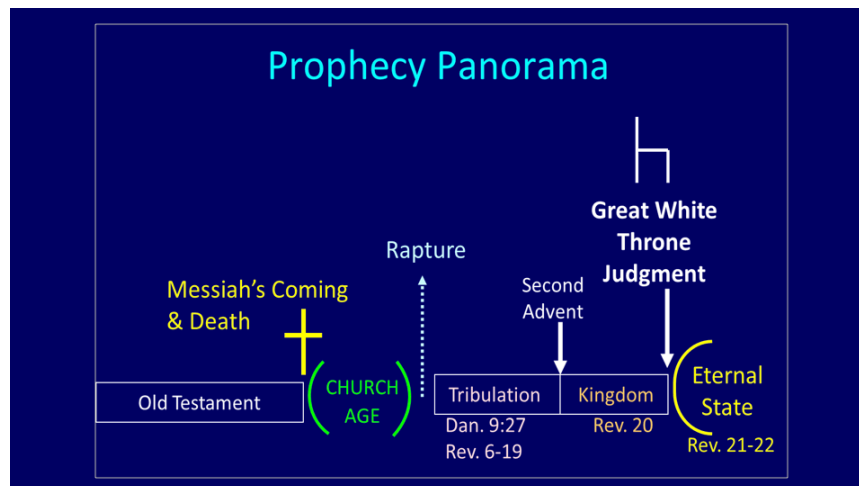
This present session that Jesus is involved in becomes the dominant theme in the Book of Hebrews. Why? Because that is whom the Hebrew Christians should seek sustenance from in the midst of pressure that they are under to lapse backward into Judaism. It was very tempting for them to lapse backward into Judaism just to get these unbelieving Jews off their back.

You can imagine how the second generation of Christians would be so tempted to do that. But the author of Hebrews is saying, "Do not do that. You have strength to endure this persecution, not coming from yourselves and your own willpower, but from your High Priest who is currently seated at the right hand of the Father." So that is why this sitting down at the right hand of the Father is such a big deal. Jesus sat down, unlike the Old Testament priests, because the job was now finished.

The note of indebtedness had not been just kicked down the road, but the principle had been canceled. And what is Jesus doing at the Father's right hand? He is orchestrating His high priesthood, which is higher than Aaron's was, which the readers of Hebrews could draw from to get strength to endure unfair persecution so they would not lapse back into an inferior revelation.



Now, is Jesus going to reign as Davidic King one day? Yes, He will. He will return to the earth. Something is holding that back. It is an unrepentant Israel. Once Israel repents, Jesus will return to this earth (Matthew 23:37-39), and launch His thousand-year reign, when He will reign from David's throne. That is the future throne that Jesus will be on one day.



You can see our prophecy panorama chart, which shows us that following the Second Advent will be the Millennial Kingdom, and that is where the prophecies and promises of the Davidic reign will be fulfilled. But currently, we are not in that time period. We are in Christ's present session, which is not on Earth, but in heaven; not on His throne in Jerusalem, but on the Father's throne, where he is not functioning as King, but as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

In that role, Jesus wants to minister to His people. And one of the things Jesus wants to give to His people, as the Book of Hebrews will develop, is rest, which I interpret as strength from Jesus, who is functioning in His High Priestly role. Jesus gives strength to His people—in the case of the audience of Hebrews, giving them the strength they need to prevent them from lapsing into Judaism.

So these three offices of Christ are critical: Prophet, First Coming; King, Second Coming. His current office is Priest, and that is what is developed in the Book of Hebrews. Now, there are a lot of people today who are trying to merge those two thrones and act as though we are in the Davidic Kingdom.

Now, one such group is called progressive dispensationalists, and they try to argue that Jesus is on David's throne now, which is some kind of part one of the Davidic Kingdom. And if you will not embrace that, and if you do not believe that, and if you do not accept that, then you believe that Jesus is doing nothing right now. In the process, the progressive dispensationalists are losing this whole concept of the present session of Christ, His High Priestly ministry after the order of Melchizedek.

Now, notice one such progressive dispensationalist making this point. Dave Anderson says in his doctoral dissertation,

"But clearly Jesus did not set up a natural theocratic kingdom with Himself as the king ruling from Jerusalem on earth before His resurrection. So, what happened to the kingdom He promised? It was postponed, many NT interpreters suggest....But if the premillennial view just espoused is true, that leaves the question concerning the present ministry of Christ. What is He doing right now?...But classical or revised dispensationalists [which is the viewpoint that I am coming from here] should also recognize the 'already' eschatology of Hebrews. Christ is not passive on the throne. He is reigning. He has subjects. And because He is the forerunner, there are many present blessings which belong to the eschatological age which can be enjoyed now because the Davidic Covenant with some of its blessings has been inaugurated."²

What Anderson is saying is that Jesus is actually orchestrating phase one of the Davidic Kingdom now, which is a viewpoint that I completely and totally reject. Jesus is not reigning as Davidic King now. He is functioning as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. And these so-called progressive dispensationalists are trying to argue that if you do not embrace their view, then you believe that Jesus is doing nothing—if He is not reigning as King, He is doing nothing.

Now, this is what you call in logic a straw man fallacy, when you interact not with what your opponent actually believes but with a mischaracterization of your opponent's position, and you tear down that mischaracterization. And your opponent will topple like a man of straw, because it is really not your opponent at all. It is a mischaracterization of your opponent's beliefs.

So that is what Dave Anderson is doing here with this idea that if you do not embrace the concept that Jesus is reigning on David's throne now, then somehow you believe that Jesus is doing nothing. As revised or classical dispensationalists, we do not believe

² David Anderson, *The King-Priest of Psalm 110 in Hebrews* (New York: Lang, 2001), 2, 296.

that Jesus is doing nothing. It is a very active session that He is engaged in as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

And in fact, Jesus' present High Priestly session is so active, although it is not the Davidic kingdom which is yet future—it is so active that the High Priest, Jesus Christ, at the Father's right hand, on the Father's throne, has the ability and the power to help the audience of Hebrews be strengthened through rest so that they do not retrogress back into Judaism thanks to persecution from unbelieving Jews.

So this is a very important area of Christology known as the present session of Jesus Christ. It is almost being lost today. In fact, it was being lost back in the days of Lewis Sperry Chafer, the founder of Dallas Theological Seminary. And notice what Chafer says here:

"The present ministry of Christ in heaven, known as His session, is far-reaching both in consequence and import. It too, has not been treated even with a passing consideration by Covenant theologians, doubtless due to their inability—because of being confronted with their one covenant theory—to introduce features and ministries which indicate a new divine purpose in the Church and by so much tend to disrupt the unity of a supposed immutable purpose and covenant of God's."³

In other words, this whole concept of the present session of Christ is being lost by people like Dave Anderson, who are basically trying to argue that the Kingdom is a dominant motif all the way through the Bible and that this age is just part one of the Davidic Kingdom. Chafer says that when you do that, you lose the present ministries that Jesus is actually doing today in the Church Age in His position as High Priest.

Chafer goes on and says,

"Since, as will be seen, certain vital ministries of Christ in heaven provide completely for the believer's security, the present session of Christ has been eschewed by Arminians in a manner equally unpardonable."⁴

A lot of people do not like this present session of Christ concept, because one of the things that Jesus is doing now in His present session is keeping us. He is holding us. And people who want to believe you can lose your salvation think they want to negate that. They do not want you to understand that Jesus is doing something tangible, something real, in this present session, which is totally unrelated to the Davidic throne.

Chafer goes on and says,

"This neglect accounts very well for the emphasis of their pulpit ministrations [in other words, people who reject an understanding that I am giving here: the present session of Christ]. The Christian public [this

³ Lewis Sperry Chafer, vol. 5, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 273-74.

⁴ Ibid.

was written all the way back in 1947], because deprived of the knowledge of Christ's present ministry, are unaware of its vast realities, though they are able from childhood itself to relate the mere historical facts and activities of Christ during His three and one-half years of service on earth."⁵

So what Chafer is saying here is that people are unaware of this current ministry that Jesus is doing. They know a ton of stuff about what He did as Prophet (in His First Coming), and they know a ton of stuff about what He will do as King (in His Second Coming). But because people are trying to argue that we are in phase one of the Kingdom, a whole body of Christology is lost to the Christian public—what Jesus is doing now—and they have very little knowledge of His present session.

And in fact, it is what Christ is doing now in His present session that will help the believer in the midst of trial, like the audience of Hebrews, to not regress backwards. So of all of the things to know about Christ, should you know things that He did? Of course. Should you know things that He will do? Of course. But equally importantly, we need to understand what Jesus is doing now. And what Jesus is doing now, as will be developed in the Book of Hebrews, is His High Priestly ministry after the order of Melchizedek in His present session as He is seated at the Father's right hand.

Chafer goes on and says,

"That Christ is doing anything now is not recognized by Christians generally and for this part-truth kind of preaching is wholly responsible."⁶

In other words, preachers do not talk about this. They talk about what Jesus did and what He will do, but they do not talk about what He is doing now, because the merger of Christ's present session with His future Millennial Kingdom is causing these unique ministries that Jesus is doing now to be lost to the Christian public.

Chafer says,

"It yet remains true, whether neglected by one or the other kind of theologian [whether it is Arminians, or Covenant theologians, so-called], that Christ is now engaged in ministry which determines the service and destiny of all those who have put their trust in Him."⁷

So why am I being kept now eternally? Because of Jesus' present session? Why am I currently being given a ministry and gifted by the Holy Spirit to do so? Because of Jesus' present session—not because of what He did or will do, but because of what He is doing now. So when Jesus ascended back to the Father, His first order of business was to take His seat on the Father's throne, indicating that His work of fixing the sin problem, unlike what Yom Kippur could accomplish, was now accomplished.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

And Christ, seated at the Father's right hand, is not inactive. It is not the Davidic Kingdom, but it is not an inactive session. Jesus is doing a ton of stuff that matters to our lives right now. And one of the things He can do is give us rest, or strength, or sustenance, or endurance so that we do not retrogress backward to an inferior revelation thanks to unrelenting pressure from unbelieving unbelievers—in the case of the Hebrews audience, unbelieving Jews.

CHRIST'S HIGH PRIESTLY ACTIVITIES IN HIS PRESENT SESSION	
1. Sustains creation (Col. 1:16-17)	7. Keeps the Saints (John 10:27-29; 1 Pet. 1:5)
2. Head over the Church (Eph. 1:22-23)	8. Intercedes for the Saints (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25)
3. Groom of the Church (Eph. 5:22-33)	9. Advocate for the Saints (Heb. 9:24; 1 John 2:1)
4. Building the Church (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:41; 4:4)	10. Restores broken fellowship (1 John 1:9)
5. Bestowal of Spiritual Gifts (Eph. 4:7-12)	11. Disciplines His children (Heb. 12:5-13)
6. Melchizedekian High Priestly role (Heb. 6:20)	12. Indwells His people (John 14:23)

Here is our final chart for today. This is just a list of twelve things that I could see from Scripture (there may be more) that show us that what Jesus is doing now is indeed an active session, and that shows that the Dave Andersons of the world have it wrong when they say that if Jesus is not reigning as Davidic King now as part one of the Kingdom, then He is doing nothing. That is silly. Jesus is doing a ton of stuff today.

For one thing, Jesus is sustaining Creation. We went over those verses earlier. He is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23). He is the groom of the church (Ephesians 5:22-33). He is the one who is building the church (Matthew 16:18). That is why when you go through the Book of Acts, the church keeps numerically growing. Who is causing that? Jesus, in His present session, is causing that.

Jesus is bestowing upon the church spiritual gifts (Ephesians 4:7-12). He is functioning as our Melchizedekian High Priest (Hebrews 6:20). There is a ton in the Book of Hebrews on that one. Jesus is the one who is keeping us (John 10:27-29; 1 Peter 1:5). That is why people who hate eternal security are down on this present session of Christ, because one of the things He is doing in His present session is sustaining us.

Jesus is interceding for us (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25)—He is currently praying for us. He is our advocate (1 John 2:1; Hebrews 9:24). This does not sound like an inactive session to me at all. Jesus is restoring broken fellowship between the sinning Christian and God the Father (for purposes of fellowship, not position) (1 John 1:9). He is the one

who disciplines His children—"whom the Lord loveth the Lord chasteneth," Hebrews 12:5-13, more of that coming in the Book of Hebrews.

Jesus is currently indwelling God's people in this age (John 14:23). So just because Jesus is seated does not mean that He is not doing anything. The sitting down shows that He finished something that the Old Testament priests could not do. No chair was in the tabernacle for reasons we have described. But Christ's first order of business was sitting down at the Father's right hand.

So this takes us to the end of Hebrews 1:1-3.

"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 of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:1-3).

Look at the finality of Jesus. Here is our list: heir of all things, Maker of all things, the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of the Father. He upholds all things; He made a complete purification for our sins; and He is now seated at the Father's right hand, indicating that His work in resolving the sin problem is finished, although He is now in a new session in which He is very active, not to be confused with the Davidic reign.

So why is the author of Hebrews giving us these seven attributes? He is showing the audience the foolishness and the folly of retrogressing backwards.