

Introduction: “Give Me Jesus” CD by Fernando Ortega

I invite you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Hebrews, chapter 1. We’re going to be exploring the first three verses together this morning.

Illustration: Someone has said that Jesus Christ came from the bosom of the Father to the bosom of a woman. He put on humanity that we might put on divinity. He became Son of Man that we might become sons of God. He was born contrary to the laws of nature, lived in poverty, was reared in obscurity, and only once crossed the boundary of the land in which He was born – and that in His childhood. He had no wealth or influence and had neither training nor education in the world’s schools. His relatives were inconspicuous and uninfluential. In infancy He startled a king. In boyhood He puzzled learned doctors. In manhood He ruled the course of nature. He walked upon the billows and hushed the sea to sleep. He healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for His services. He never wrote a book and yet all the libraries of the world could not hold the books about Him. He never wrote a song, yet He has furnished the theme for more songs than all songwriters together. He never founded a college, yet all the schools together cannot boast of as many students as He has. He never practiced medicine and yet He has healed more broken hearts than all the doctors have healed broken bodies. This Jesus Christ is the star of astronomy, the rock of geology, the lion and the lamb of zoology, the harmonizer of all discords, and the healer of all diseases. Throughout history great men have come and gone, yet He lives on. Herod could not kill Him. Satan could not seduce Him. Death could not destroy Him and the grave could not hold Him.

Read: He 1:1-3, “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.³ The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”

These verses are essentially a summary of the entire book. They are the thesis statement if you will; the theme of the book that the remaining verses elaborate on.

Hebrews stands out as a much needed voice calling our attention to the One who knows what life is all about and what truly matters.

I cannot think of a timelier or more appropriate message for our day than the one found here in the book of Hebrews. We live in a day and age in which everything but what God says in the Bible matters more to people. Ignorance of who God truly is and a lack of knowledge and understanding of what the Bible teaches is at an all time high.

This letter distinguishes itself from most other NT letters in that it doesn’t begin with the typical greeting identifying the writer and the recipients. Instead, the writer dives into the very heart of his main subject right from the start, similar to that of John 1 and 1 John. The writer’s main interest is to focus the attention of his readers on what is most important about what he has to say and so he doesn’t draw attention to himself. We don’t know who the writer is. He doesn’t identify himself. He didn’t want to distract his readers with anything other than the unparalleled significance of the One he is writing about. He points to the fact that above anything and everything else, Jesus is the difference in life. He’s what matters most. Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God; the final word of God to mankind.

It seems clear from the text that the writer had a particular audience in view although his words have universal application to believers of every time and in every place throughout history.

Understanding and appreciating the background of this letter makes its truths stand out in bold relief against the backdrop of our day. This letter was written to Jewish Christians who had left their traditional religious life of Judaism for new life in Christ. It was a radical departure from centuries of law-keeping, ritual observances, and religious rites. Their Jewish backgrounds didn't fit with the anti-Semitic culture of the Gentile Roman world. Because of their faith in Christ they were regarded as outcasts and were cut off from their Jewish families and friends. Their faith in Christ was considered militant by Gentiles who claimed allegiance to Caesar and treated them with contempt.

The writer immediately points his readers to Jesus as the One who is to be their primary focus. No one faced the horrors of ridicule, rejection, humiliation and physical brutality to the extent that Jesus did and yet He remained steadfast and unwavering in His faith in God the Father. Through His resurrection from the dead Jesus proved Himself to be victorious over death and to be the living Savior and sure hope of mankind.

When you've been devastated by loss or rejection, when your failure has brought you to the depths of despair, when someone you've counted on to be there for you gets up and walks out, it's hard to keep your chin up and go with the punches when there's no fight left in you.

Hebrews is a sermon rooted in real life for believers in real life. The harsh reality of life in an insecure world had left these Hebrew Christians feeling overwhelmed, disheartened, discouraged, emotionally fragile and defeated. If you can identify with any of these feelings in your own life, Hebrews offers you words of hope and truths that can transform your life.

The recipients of this letter were likely a local house-church of Hebrew Christians in Rome. They were spiritually immature in the faith, even though they should have been further along by this point according to He 5:11-12. They were in a backslidden condition and in danger of turning their backs on Christ and returning to Judaism. Their faith, conviction, and enthusiasm were waning (3:6, 9, 12, 14); they were neglecting prayer, public worship, and the Scriptures (2:1, 10:25; 12:12-13). Times were tough. Christianity was branded as criminal and persecution was commonplace. It just wasn't a safe environment to be a Christian in.

Many of these Hebrew Christians were on the verge of giving up. Some had been physically assaulted, had their homes ransacked, been thrown in prison, and been ridiculed in public because of their faith (10:32-34).

Into the depths of their plight a word of exhortation and encouragement came to them from a close friend who knew them and their circumstances well and he attempted to breathe into them a message of hope.

The writer brings them face to face with the God who speaks. God had not deserted them, in fact He offered them far more help and hope than they realized.

For believers in Jesus Christ, the issue is not what you don't have in your current circumstances, it's relying on who you do have in your current circumstances. The writer exhorts these struggling believers in 13:5 to "...be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'" You have God!

If your world has been turned upside down, if you been betrayed by a trusted friend or partner, if you are feeling overwhelmed and don't know what to do or who to turn to? As a believer in Jesus Christ you need to know and rely on all that you have in your relationship with Jesus. Jesus is the difference.

The writer of Hebrews wastes no time in getting to the point of His word of encouragement. In the first 3 verses he emphasizes the fact that Jesus is superior to everyone and everything. The only way you can really know someone is if they tell you about themselves or someone else who knows them tells you. We can know God because His words are recorded in the Bible. God speaks to us and others speak to us about God through the words of the Bible.

Let's look at **V1, "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,"**

The prophets were God's divinely appointed spokesmen. It was through the prophets of the OT era that God made His will known to the ancestors of these Jewish Christians and He did this, we read in v1 "at many times (progressively –bit by bit over time) and in various ways" – through laws, institutions, ceremonies, mighty acts, dreams, visions, stories, exhortations, angelic appearances, and in other ways.

The Bible reveals who God is and explains Him to us. Apart from God's supernatural activity in doing this we could not know Him. The OT is the voice of God committed to writing – "God Spoke." The NT is God's voice committed to writing and is His full and final Word – "God has spoken." The Bible is "God speaking." God's revelation is progressive – it progressed from promise in the OT to fulfillment in the NT.

God revealed Himself to the Prophets of the OT and the Apostles of the NT who committed to writing what He said by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit (2 Pe 1:20-21).

What would we appeal to for knowledge about God, the world in which we live, the true meaning of life and how to live it, our value as human beings, and what is right and wrong, if God had not had it recorded for us in the Bible? The Bible was given to us by God so we would have His definitive word on these and many other areas of life that we wouldn't have answers to if He hadn't. There are no communication gaps with God. We cannot legitimately accuse God of being silent about the things that matter most in life. He's told us what we need to know in order to handle the circumstances we find ourselves in. Peter reminds us in 2 Pe 1:3 "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness." The writer moves from OT promise to NT fulfillment in verse 2.

V2 "but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."

What the prophets spoke *of* God, Jesus accomplished *as* God. He was the definitive voice of God – God in person. No one could reveal the Father like the Son.

Jesus' is the last prophetic voice of the OT and He brings into existence the NT fulfillment of OT truth through His words and works. Verses 1 and 2 bear this out – "In the past ... but now." God's revelation through the prophets of the OT ceased with the coming of Christ who is the very essence of God's message. Jesus presents God the Father's final and perfect word to mankind.

The words "God (He) says" are dominant in the book of Hebrews. These Hebrew Christians did not have copies of the Bible like we do today. Copies of the Old Testament books were kept in the local synagogue and house-church to be used during the worship services for the instruction of the people. They committed the truth to memory. How much more fortunate we are today to have both Testaments in our Bibles readily accessible to us and how often do we refer to or study them? Easy come, easy go?

Jesus inaugurated the last days, which stretch between His first coming and His second coming. We are in the last days and will be until Christ returns.

The only voice that truly counts in this life is God's. God is the only One who has anything of eternal significance to say. He describes who Jesus is clearly, succinctly, and authoritatively. Jesus, being the very Son of God, makes Him the Heir of all that belongs to God, which is everything that is. God is the owner of everything (De 10:14).

The phrase "through whom he made the universe" qualifies the scope of what Jesus the Son inherits ... the universe – the entire created order. Jesus is not only Heir of all things, but Creator of all things (Jn 1:3 "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.")

Jesus created the material world, the spiritual world, time, space, energy – everything. And it all will become the Son's at the end of the ages. Having drawn the attention of his readers to Jesus as God's final word, the writer now describes the nature of the Son in verse 3.

V3 "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."

"Radiance" is a translation of the Gr. term, *apaugasma* "to send forth light" Jesus said in Jn 8:12 "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Jesus radiates the light of God's perfection, and majesty. This is described for us by John in the prologue to his Gospel 1:14 "... We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Paul points out that Jesus is "... the image of the invisible God ..." in Co 1:15. Our English word icon comes from this term, it means a precise copy, an exact reproduction, like a fine sculpture, or portrait, or a minted coin that bears the image of a sovereign or president – a precise reproduction of the original. Jesus is the exact reproduction of God. We read in Co 2:9 "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." The Son bears the exact imprint of the Father's being from eternity. Jesus is the embodiment of Almighty God.

The Son is identical in substance with the Father, being Himself fully God. In all His attributes and abilities the Son is exactly like the Father. In fact, Jesus said in Jn 8:19 "... If you knew me, you would know my Father also; " and in Jn 14:9 "... anyone who has seen me has seen the Father ...; and again in Jn 10:30 "I and the Father are one."

Jesus is not only Creator and Heir of all things, He is the Sustainer who supports, preserves, maintains, and controls all things. Without Jesus' continuous activity to ensure the universe stays in balance based on the laws of continuance and constancy, nothing would be as it is. Jesus is the Ruler of the universe. And it is on the basis of His mighty and enabling Word that "... in him all things hold together." (Co 1:17).

The significance of Christ's sacrifice for the sins of mankind is not in what He *did*, but in what he *gave* – His life. Our problem isn't so much that of continuing sinful behaviors, as it is a sin-stained conscience that until dealt with is the source of what's wrong. Only Jesus can eradicate the source. Jesus' once for all sacrifice of Himself and daily intercession as our advocate before the Father is the answer to our sin problem.

The picture of Christ being seated indicates the finished character of his once-for-all sacrifice for sin, as He 10:12 tells us "... when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God."

Paul in Php 2:9-11 writes, “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

What is it that is causing you to struggle in your Christian faith and to doubt that living for God is really worth it? What is testing your faith and tempting you to turn away from God, take matters into your own hands, and handle things in your own way? Take a spiritual inventory – when was the last time you had a serious in depth conversation with God about what’s happening in your life because you believe He is the answer to your every need? When was the last time you seriously read and studied your Bible because you believe it is your spiritual life-line to God? What is most important to you in life? What are devoting your time, attention, and effort to? If It’s not loving God with every fiber of your being and loving those around you, your missing out on the greatest riches in life.

He 1:1-3 capture three significant roles that Jesus fulfilled par excellence:

1. He is The Ultimate Prophet through whom God has spoken His final inspired Word to Man
2. He is The Great High Priest who has accomplished the perfect work of cleansing for people’s sin
3. He is The King of Kings and LORD of Lords who sits enthroned in the place of chief honor at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

These verses answer three burning questions:

1. Is God still revealing divine truth today? The answer is No! “God has spoken.” We have the perfect, complete, and permanent record of divinely revealed truth in the 66 books of the Bible. God has fully revealed His will in His Word, The Scripture which testifies to this warns against adding to it or taking away from it. God gives us insight into His Word and the Holy Spirit illuminates the truth for our understanding, but inspired revelation comes only through His written Word (De 4:2, 12:32; Pr 30:6, Re 22:18).
2. Is God still in control of this world? Always was, always is, and always will be. Regardless of what you may hear through the media or from others or even question within yourself, the first three verses of Hebrews settles the question if you are willing to take God at His Word. He is right now sovereignly sustaining all things by His powerful Word.
3. Is God really loving and caring and aware of what our circumstances are? The answer is Yes! The most loving and caring thing God could do, He’s already done. Our problem is sin, we’re responsible for it, not God, and we deserve to die for it. Yet God has made provision for the forgiveness of our sin through the sacrifice of His own Son. There’s no greater demonstration of grace, mercy, and sacrificial love than this.

“Give Me Jesus”

In the morning when I rise, give me Jesus.
 And when I am alone, give me Jesus.
 And when I come to die, give me Jesus.
 You can have all this world, but give me Jesus.

Jesus is the difference.