

Genesis 2:18-24  
 Psalm 8  
 Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12  
 Mark 10:2-16

Heb 1:3  
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## THE RADIANCE OF GOD'S GLORY

The letter to the Hebrews does not begin, “To the Hebrews.” It has the name because it is best understood by those familiar with the faith and customs of the Jews, especially the role of a priest. Neither does the letter reveal its writer. The apostle Paul, his companion Barnabus, his friend Apollos, and even Aquila and Priscilla of Corinth have all been suggested. But the real author is known only in heaven.

Heb 1:1-4 *In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup>He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup>having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs.<sup>1</sup>*

- *In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets ... (v.1).* God indeed spoke in various ways through the prophets. His message always fitted the times. There were times of judgment, as in Amos 5:18-27 which concludes, “*Therefore I will take you into exile ...*” There were times of reconciliation, as in Isa 1:18-20, “*Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord ...*” On many occasions the prophets used illustrations rather than words to get the point across. See Ezek 4 and 5, for example.

- *... but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son ... (v.2).* The Bible says, “*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven*” (Eccl 3:1). God has always set all the seasons and times. There has always been a “right time” for everything and, “*while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly*” (Rom 5:6). In Christ, God has “spoken” his final Word to the world. The prophets spoke the words of God. Jesus Christ is different. He is God. His whole being “speaks” of and for God. Compared with the way God spoke of old, it is like wideband compared with dialup.

- *He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature ... (v.3).* “Reflect” has different meanings depending in its use, and is misleading here. The *glory of God* comes from *within* Jesus. Other translations (NAS, KJV, NIV, etc.) use words like “radiance” or “brightness” rather than “reflect” to show what Jesus meant. He said, “*I and the Father are one*” (John 10:30). Before he went to Calvary, he prayed to be glorified: “*Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee*” (John 17:1). When Jesus died on the cross, his prayer was granted. The Bible says, “*Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (Phil 2:9-11). The world will see his glory one day. Jesus said, “*They will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*” (Matt 24:30).

- *... upholding the universe by his word of power (v.3).* John’s gospel introduces Jesus by saying, “*He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made* (John 1:2-3). Besides *having the glory of God* and *upholding the universe by his word of power*, discuss the other things verses 2-3 in Heb 1 say about Jesus: *He made purification for sins* and is now *at the right hand of God* (v.2). He has *become superior to angels*, a position he surrendered in order to become like us (v.3). And finally, the name he has obtained (Jesus, Savior) is *more excellent than theirs* (v.3).

<sup>1</sup> Bible quotations are from the RSV.

Heb 2:5-9. *For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. <sup>6</sup>It has been testified somewhere, "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou carest for him? <sup>7</sup>Thou didst make him for a little while lower than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, <sup>8</sup>putting everything in subjection under his feet." Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. <sup>9</sup>But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for every one.*

- “What is man that thou art mindful of him? ...” (v.6). There are two schools of thought on the meaning of “him” in v.6. The quotation in v.6-8 is from Psalm 8:4-6. One is that Psalm 8 is Messianic and refers to Christ; thus “*We do not yet see everything in subjection to him*” (Christ) refers to the obvious fact that the hearts of men are not yet pure, and Christ has not yet returned. The second is that all of Psalm 8 is about mankind, not Messiah; therefore, “*We do not yet see everything in subjection to him*” (man) is saying God’s original plan for man’s dominion in Gen 1:27ff has not been fulfilled on account of man’s disobedience.
- *But we see Jesus ...* (v.9). Using the second interpretation, *we see Jesus* entering into this state of affairs, showing men how to live, suffering our way of life along with us, and dying on the cross to save us from our self-made bondage. Both schools of thought have merit. Which do you prefer, and why?

Heb 2:10-13. *For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering. <sup>11</sup>For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren, <sup>12</sup>saying, "I will proclaim thy name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will praise thee." <sup>13</sup>And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Here am I, and the children God has given me."*

- *The pioneer of their salvation* (v.10). Jesus is *the pioneer of our salvation*, in the sense of going at the head of a pilgrimage or being the first to do something. Romans 8:29 says Jesus is “*the first-born among many brethren.*” In his death and resurrection, Jesus was *made perfect through suffering*. How would you answer if someone asked, “Why should the author of your faith have to be *made perfect through suffering*?”
- *He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin* (v.11). At least part of your answer must be here. Every person is unique – different from every other person. Yet we all share two things in common: (1) We are born, as Adam was created, with a spirit that identifies itself with God. *God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him ...* (Gen 1:27). (2) We all suffer pain and death – the effects of man’s disobedience – and each of us, individually, has had a share in breaking God’s law.

Jesus, *the pioneer of our salvation*, came to redeem us from our disobedient ways so our identity with God could be restored in all the fullness God always intended it to have. Gods of other religions tend to be remote and do not experience the sufferings of men. But the real God, who made us for himself, came to us, *taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men* (Phil 2:7), and suffered persecution and death in order to save us from suffering the eternal fate of the lost.

Why did God visit us and save us in this way? The Bible says Jesus *learned obedience* and was *made perfect* through what he suffered (Heb 5:8). The best way to understand another person's sorrows and sufferings is to experience them yourself. A vigorous person in good health has no conception of the weariness of one with a chronic illness who tires easily and is never free from pain. Experience is at times the *only* way to understand what someone is going through. The idea agrees with Heb 2:18, “*Because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.*” The Bible describes Jesus as “*a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*” (Isa 53:5).

The answer must go deeper than this, however. The Bible teaches that God has always understood suffering in its deepest sense. He always hears the cries of those who suffer. Jesus, in suffering on our behalf, not only learned temptation and suffering as a man – he also took it from us onto himself. *Upon him was the chastisement that made us whole ...* (Isa 53:5). It is as if a loving father saved his child from a fatal disease by assuming it into his own body. There is therefore every reason, in all circumstances, to give thanks to and worship Jesus, who is, even in his suffering, *the radiance of God’s glory*.