

## 2. The Message of Hebrews (1Q 2022— In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews)

**Biblical Material:** Heb. 1:5–14; Luke 1:30–33; Ps. 132:1–5; Heb. 2:14–16; Heb.5:1–4; 1 Pet. 2:9; Heb. 8:8–12; Heb. 8:1.

### Quotes

- The divinity of Christ is the believer’s assurance of eternal life. *Ellen White*
- I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ. *Mahatma Gandhi*
- To recognize Christ as God is to recognize him as the only being capable of rising above the violence that had, up to that point, absolutely transcended mankind. Violence is the controlling agent in every form of mythic or cultural structure, and Christ is the only agent who is capable of escaping from these structures and freeing us from their dominance.... A non-violent deity can only signal his existence to mankind by having himself driven out by violence – by demonstrating that he is not able to establish himself in the Kingdom of Violence. *René Girard*
- Believing in the divinity of Jesus is the heart of Christian orthodoxy. But believing in the viability of Jesus’ ideas makes Christianity truly radical. *Brian Zahnd*
- The most pressing question on the problem of faith is whether a man as a civilized being can believe in the divinity of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, for therein rests the whole of our faith. *Fyodor Dostoevsky*
- This historic Christian doctrine of the divinity of Christ does not simply mean that Jesus is like God. It is far more radical than that. It means that God is like Jesus. *D. Elton Trueblood*

### Questions

How would you sum up the theme of Hebrews? What is the major point of the book—and why is this important? The introduction says that Jesus came to make things clearer. How does Hebrews help in this? Much of Hebrews is about faith—so how do we define and explain faith to those around us—especially to those who may misunderstand what faith is all about?

### Bible summary

In Heb. 1:5–14 Paul’s argument is that Jesus is truly divine as the Son of God. Some believed that Jesus was an angel, a messenger from God, but Paul is making it clear from Scripture that Jesus has a completely different nature. He is not an angelic being. This is confirmed by the angel Gabriel’s announcement to Mary about the birth of Jesus in Luke 1:30–33. Ps. 132:1–5 is a reminder of David’s promise to make a place for the Lord to live in. Jesus took on humanity and lived with us (Heb. 2:14–16). God appoints the priests (Heb.5:1–4). “You are a specially-chosen family, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.” 1 Peter 2:9 FBV. Heb. 8:8–12 points to a “better” covenant founded on “better” promises. Heb. 8:1 states that Jesus is our heavenly high priest.

### Comment

The essential message of Hebrews is that Jesus is God! We need to realize how shocking Hebrews would have been to observant Jews of the time. For example look at the statement

made about Moses: “Jesus deserves much greater glory than Moses, in the same way that the builder of a house deserves more credit than the house.” Hebrews 3:3 FBV.

In the Old Testament, Moses is surely the greatest leader, the one who took God’s people to the promised land, the one through whom God gave the law, and the writer of the first five books of the Bible. So to place him in an inferior position to Jesus was a huge offence in Jewish eyes.

The truth is that Jesus is God, and represents God. Some of the time thought Jesus was some “super-man,” or high angel. Greek philosophy had a problem with a god becoming human—for physical flesh was seen as evil. So it was essential to stress Jesus’ divine nature.

Yet by taking on human nature and its painful situation, Jesus too is also “prepared” (Heb. 3:10 FBV). Not that God doesn’t know or experience our suffering—rather we can appreciate God all the more. It is not to change anything in God—for otherwise the picture would be of Jesus returning to the Father to persuade him to be kind to us. No: the important aspect of Jesus and his divine nature taking on humanity is that this is the only way back for us; the only way we can be won to love and trust in the saving God who came because of his great love for us.

If we’ve seen Jesus, we’ve seen God. This is the baseline for all that we as Christians should think and believe about God. While the Old Testament is precious to us, while the words of the apostles are of great benefit, the most important information about God comes from Jesus, especially as he *demonstrates* what God is truly like.

We need take some time to think about the kind of God Jesus spoke about, and in his actions let us see God. For Jesus is God—another aspect that sometimes we lose sight of. This is *God with us*—living and working among us, showing us the kind of person he is in everything he does.

The stories we read in the gospels are so familiar to us that sometimes we miss the impact, and how shocking he was, especially to those who claimed to know God. In fact Jesus was not the kind of God that the religious leaders wanted—which was one of the reasons Jesus was killed in the end. For Jesus came to show us God, and it is a shocking, puzzling picture of God. Why does he do the things he does? Why does he say the things he says? Jesus is *radical*. He confronts the popular picture of God, and says “You’re all wrong! God isn’t like that, he’s like this!” and then goes on to *show* it.

### **Ellen White comments**

Christ condescended to assume human nature, but the dwarfed powers of man were unable through ignorance to comprehend or distinguish the divine. Jesus was not spared the necessity of defining and defending His divine nature, because the minds of men were so thoroughly human they could not discern the divine beneath the assumption of humanity. In order to make His lessons forceful, He was compelled, when these impressions hindered His usefulness, to refer to His mysterious and divine character, leading their minds into a train of thought that was favorable to the transforming power of truth. {1888 260-261}

Jesus came into the world to illustrate the character of God in His own life, and He swept back the misrepresentations that Satan had originated, and revealed the glory of God. It was only by living among men that He could reveal the mercy, compassion, and love of His heavenly Father; for it was only by actions of benevolence that He could set forth the grace of God. The unbelief of men was deep seated, and yet they could not resist the testimony of His God-like example, and His deeds of love and truth. {SD 139.3}

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