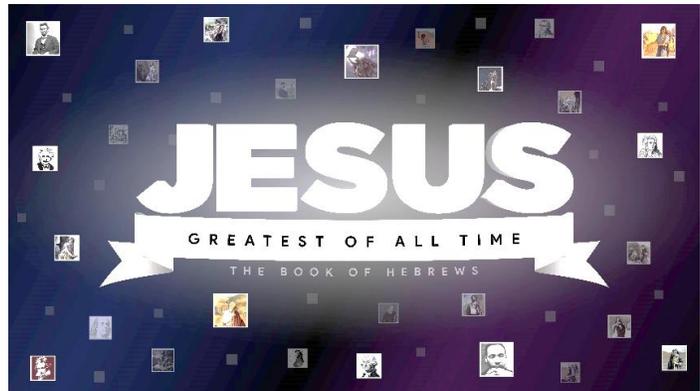




# VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

## The Verdict is In Hebrews 1:1-4 The Book of Hebrews, Part 1 Tim Badal | September 13, 2020



It's my great privilege to start our new series—The Greatest of All Time—looking at the book of Hebrews. Please open God's Word as we begin this new series that we're going to dedicate the rest of this school year looking at. This series is focused on teaching us what we need to learn about a group of first-century believers who were having a difficult time. They were thinking about giving up on their faith. Following Jesus had grown too difficult and distressing for them, so many were going to return to their roots in Judaism.

Hebrews is one of only a few anonymous books in all of Scripture. This author writes that when they fix their eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of their faith (Hebrews 12:2), they would persevere and shine like stars. Now as we look at these 13 chapters, they are one long written sermon, from which we will be looking at two truths that emerge:

While we don't know who the author is, we do know that he knew a lot about the Old Testament. We know that he loved the Old Testament, the work and religion of Judaism, as well as all that came with being a Jewish follower. But what he loved even more was Jesus Christ. He longed to tell his brothers and sisters in Christ how much he loved and how much he had grown to know about Jesus. The focus of this book is to tell all who will listen that Jesus Christ is in fact the greatest of all time.

Now, as we look at this letter, we will also see that it is going to make much of Jesus. It's going to tell us that His name is above every other name, that knowing Jesus is going to lead us each and every day to the greatest joy, confidence and endurance that we need to make this life abundant, no matter how difficult it can be at times. So to that end, we are going to explore Hebrews under the heading, "Jesus, the Greatest of All Time."

Now that line—The Greatest of All Time—is one of the biggest and most used arguments in sports. As a sports fan, I've been involved in many discussions, asking in any given sport, "Who is the greatest athlete to ever play that sport?" In 2018, Complex magazine ran an article in which it wanted to settle all these arguments. It wanted to end all discussions about who the greatest was. It was headlined this way: "Who is the GOAT?" That is an acronym for greatest of all time. This is what they wrote:

The acronym GOAT, or greatest of all time, gets thrown around rather casually these days. The one who is truly the greatest of all time in sports needs to be settled and we felt it was the right time to settle any and all arguments about who the greatest was. So today we end all debates. We're going to survey major sports and we're going to crown once and for all the greatest and put to rest any and all bar arguments and Twitter beefs about who is the best when it comes to basketball, football, baseball, soccer, tennis, boxing and yes, even wrestling.

The task is simple. We're going to make the case on why so-and-so deserves GOAT status and make no apologies for the choices we make. So look at our list; fight us on our selections if you must, but we're confident that we have proven that these individuals are above and beyond anyone else in their respective sports.

Then they list them. Here's who they said was the best in their particular sport:

- Basketball – Michael Jordan. Who can question that?
- Baseball – Babe Ruth
- Tennis – Serena Williams
- Football – the historic quarterback, Joe Montana
- Soccer – the great Pelé
- Boxing – it was who he thought he was, Mohammad Ali
- WWEF wrestling – the nature boy, Ric Flair

You see, all of these are great men and women. Each one has all manner of accolades that put them in the discussion. In their day and in their sport, there were very few who rivaled each of these individuals. But notice how Complex magazine finishes the article: "In the case of each of these, we should all bow down to these gods living among us mere mortals."

Now, I'm a big sports fan and while I'm a fan of many of these individuals and got to see some of them play and hone their craft, I have to be honest with you, the greatest of all time lands on the shoulders of only one individual—Jesus Christ. You see, when it comes to Jesus Christ, there is no equal. When it comes to Jesus Christ, there is no contender. When it comes to Jesus Christ, there is no runner up. Jesus Christ is and always has been and always will be the greatest of all time. He is the Champion of champions. He is the pinnacle of pinnacles and that is exactly what the book of Hebrews tells us.

I want you to notice that as we study the book of Hebrews, Jesus is going to be called greater than someone else 13 different times. He's going to be greater and more superior than the patriarchs, prophets and angels. Listen to me friends, there is no competition. There is no one who is better than our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So that's what we're going to learn about in this letter. Right out of the starting gate the author begins to gush about Jesus. He can't share enough of all that he knows and loves about Jesus. But sadly in this world, many will disagree with the assessment this book makes about Jesus being the greatest.

In fact, lots of people have things to say about Jesus. Atheist Richard Dawkins says that Jesus is just "Santa Claus for adults." Pop British singer Elton John said, "Jesus is a compassionate, super-intelligent gay man who understood human problems." These earthly definitions of Jesus are a mockery of Who Jesus really is. They are blasphemy to Who and what our Lord and Savior is all about. So let's not listen to fools talk about their views of Jesus. I want to go to God's own words, starting with Hebrews 1:1-4, where we will see three reasons why God the Father gives Jesus the title, "The Greatest of All Time." Let's look at the text:

<sup>1</sup> Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup> He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making 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 inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Let's pray.

Father God, as we come to this passage, I pray that it will reveal to us Who You are. And in knowing Who You are more and more, that we will know ourselves, our sins and what we are called to, because we are living in relationship with You. Thank You for being our greatest hero of heroes and I pray that in this study, we may honor You in all that is said and done. We love You and give You praise. In Christ's name. Amen

Let's look at three reasons God the Father gives as to why Jesus is the great at all time.

## Hebrews says Jesus is the greatest of all time because...

### 1. God fully and finally speaks through Him.

I love how the author starts verse one: *"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke..."* Now let's stop there. The author of Hebrews does not start in Bethlehem, nor with the early ministry of Jesus. He gives the meta-narrative of all Scripture which is the whole story of human history—of cosmic history: *"In the beginning God..."* That's how the book of Genesis starts and that's where Hebrews starts. Listen to me brothers and sisters. Our worldview begins with that phrase, *"In the beginning, God..."* God was in the beginning. Jesus, as John 1:1 says, was in the beginning. (changes approved prior to this point)

Now we learn something else about this phrase in verse one. Yes, God was in the beginning. Long ago, there was God. But more importantly we learn that this God Who has been forever did create you and me in order to have a relationship with us. How do I know that? Because it says, *"at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers..."* Now let's understand something here. God created all of creation, both seen and unseen. He put humanity—you and me—at the apex of His creation. By doing so, He created us in order that we might have a relationship with Him. God did not just put everything in place, then leave on a celestial vacation. He is a God Who is interacting and relating to us personally. So He begins to speak to us.

Now we see that He spoke first of all *"to our fathers by the prophets..."* We know that He started with the patriarchs and prophets, but what is being talked about here is how God speaks to humanity. He speaks in a variety of ways. We know He speaks through creation and our conscience, but most importantly we see that He speaks through humanity. At different times and in different ways, God spoke. Now each one of these patriarchs and prophets, while God spoke to them, spoke to them in parts and pieces.

I want you to envision for a moment that the Old Testament is like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Every once in a while God would give one piece of the puzzle to a prophet—a man appointed to share part of the story with people—. Little by little, He gave some to Abraham, some to Isaac, some to Noah, some to Moses, some to Joshua, some to Samuel and others, like King David and King Solomon. Then other puzzle pieces were given to the prophets, both major and minor. Each of them received different pieces of this jigsaw puzzle. They just got part of the story. Now these parts of the story came in different ways. For some it was through the law; for others it was through wisdom or songs or history. Little by little, at various times and places, the Jewish people got to know a little more about Who God was.

You see, a truth we need to recognize is that in fact God is speaking. And what are we doing with that? The writer of Hebrews is telling the writers, "Listen, get to know God in His Word because He has something to say to you." That should cause us to revere the Word of God as the living and active Word that he is talking about. His Word is greater than any double-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12).

There's another truth we need to understand. Through the Word, we get to know Who God is and what His plans and purposes are, so God has seen fit to reveal Himself through His Word. These Jewish Christians were able to know about God, but it wasn't until Jesus came that they would know in full. As the parts of the puzzle were being put together, people were getting an idea of what was going on, but it was not until Jesus came that they began to fully understand and know Who God is and what His redemption is all about. That's why the Apostle Paul said that this knowledge about Who God is and what He's going to do was a mystery until it would be revealed in the later days (1 Peter 1:3-5). So we have before us, in Jesus, all that we need to know about God the Father.

G. Campbell Morgan, a British pastor years ago, wrote this: "When God spoke to men through Christ, God said everything that He had to say which means that He said everything that men need to hear." You see, when Jesus became one of us, He fulfilled everything and put the greatest exclamation point on every verse and every sentence of Old Testament Scripture. It was the "ah-ha moment"—now we can know what He meant in Genesis. Now we can know what He meant through Moses in Exodus. Now we can know what He meant when the psalmist wrote these truths about this individual Who would come. It was Jesus. You see, every element, every prophecy and every verse of Old Testament Scripture pointed to the coming of the Messiah Who is Jesus, the Name above all names. When Jesus came, He finally and fully spoke on behalf of the Father. But notice it's even more than that because when we stop there, we make Jesus

out to just be a prophet. Islam teaches that Jesus was in the line of the great prophets. But my friends, Jesus is more than that.

Notice that the author says this One Who *"...spoke to our fathers through the prophets...has spoken to us by his Son..."* So what do we need to know about this Son *"whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world"*? Notice how He describes Jesus in verse three: *"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature..."* Now let's stop here and understand a couple truths. When it says *"He is the radiance of the glory of God..."* the Hebrew Christians, who were the original audience, would have understood that the glory of God—the *shekinah* glory of God—was what Moses saw (Exodus 33:17-23, 34:29:35). But Moses only saw the back side of the glory of God and it turned his face as white as snow. Having been in the presence of God made his face and beard brilliant and even difficult to gaze upon. He only had a glimpse of the glory of God.

The *shekinah* glory was later revealed in the tabernacle and Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 40:34-35). It was veiled because sinful man could not see it, but in Jesus that *shekinah* glory was shown. That's why when Jesus tells the apostles, "When you have seen Me, you have seen the Father" (John 8-14), we know what he's talking about. Jesus is the radiance of the glory of our Father in heaven. When we look at Christ, we see most fully our God in heaven. Why? Because Jesus shares the very nature of God, being the second person of the Trinity. Jesus is on par with—equal in every way to—our God in heaven. This is where the divine Son is different from a human son.

Now I have three sons and each of them share a little bit of who I am. They share a striking resemblance to their dad. But Jesus is the exact representation, the exact imprint. The picture given here is of a signet ring that would be put into wax to seal a document; what came out of that wax would be an exact representation of that ring. When we see Jesus, we see all of Who God is. He is deity, as Paul says in Colossians 2:9, that dwelt in bodily form. He's the very essence of God. Jesus is the greatest because God spoke fully and finally to us through Him.

## 2. God exclusively saves through Him.

Now notice the second thing. Not only do we see God and hear from God most fully in Jesus, but it is through Jesus that we are saved. This is what Jesus meant in John 14:1-6 when He said in part, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

I want you to know that some people say Jesus is inclusive, but Jesus utters the most exclusive words of all time. He taught that is we want to get to God the Father in heaven, we have to go through Him. But if we stop there we make Jesus out to be just a Messenger; that He just has the divine directions of how man gets to God. But notice what the author says in verse three: *"After making purification for sins..."* This One Who spoke fully and finally to us, Who points us to God, went even a step further. He made the way to God. He did so by being our purification.

Now let's stop here. The original audience of these Hebrews would have fully understood what that meant because each year they would take a lamb and place it on an altar. It would have been the best lamb they had and for a full year, their sins were atoned for—covered. The author says Jesus is better than any of those Old Testament sacrifices. Jesus is the greatest Lamb. As John 1:29 says, Jesus is *"the Lamb of God, who that takes away the sins of the world!"*

Now let's remember what we know about this Jesus. He is the radiance of the glory of God. He is the exact imprint of the nature and person of God. Jesus put on flesh and made His dwelling among us. Let this to sink in. The God Who upholds the universe came to earth as a baby, learned humility and was obedient to sinful men. He walked with us. He talked with us. He ate with us. He prayed for us. He made us His friends. He healed us of our diseases. He pointed us to the Father in heaven all the while. Then we beat Him, mistreated Him, mocked and scorned Him. We falsely accused Him of being the son of the devil. Through a trial and accusing Him of crimes He did not commit, we put Him on a grizzly cross built by the Romans to execute the vilest of criminals. What Jesus did in that moment was not call us out or destroy us with the power at His disposal; instead, He laid down His life and died for you and me. He did that so we might be purified from our sins; so that we might enter into a right relationship with God.

Chuck Swindoll, the famed preacher, put it this way: "The first Adam undid humanity by his disobedience, plunging the world into darkness, death, sin and suffering. But the last Adam—Jesus Christ—through His voluntary suffering and death on the cross, drove out darkness and banished death. What had been poisoned by sin was cured by the blood of Christ forever, once and for all. Never to be repeated." You see, as the author of Hebrews explains throughout this book,

no earthly power could do this. No heavenly, angelic being could do this. This is what makes Jesus the greatest of all time. He saved us from our sins.

Now notice what this purification means. Once it was done, once He atoned for our sins, He *"sat down..."* For the original audience, this would be so important. No more would they dedicate each day wondering, wishing and hoping that they had done enough to purify and purge themselves from their sins. You see, what they had labored all their lives to do, Jesus did once and for all. He sat down, meaning these Hebrews no longer had to worry about working, toiling and stressing about where they stood with God. Now Jesus had made purification for their sin. He sat down because what He had done was finished, just as He said He had done on the cross (John 19:30). Because of that finished work, Jesus exclusively saves. That makes Him the greatest of all time.

### **3. God powerfully sustains all things through Him.**

Let's consider one final truth. God says Jesus is the greatest of all time because He powerfully sustains everything through Jesus. Notice in verse three that He *"...upholds the universe by the word of his power."* Now there are a couple things we need to understand. First, He upholds this creation, not as a celestial janitor or maintenance man, but the author says that He is the One Who created the universe. So we see that He created it by the power of His word and that He continually upholds it, making sure everything is in the perfect place where it needs to be. That means a couple important truths. First, whatever power the Father in heaven has, Jesus has the same power. If we take any iota of power or strength away from Jesus that God has, we make Him something that He is not. Jesus is the omnipotent God, with all the attributes and abilities that our God in heaven has.

Secondly, we see an important truth here in that there is not a single thing outside of the power of Jesus Christ. There is not a renegade molecule outside the will and plan of God. There is no event that takes place where Jesus sits on His throne in heaven and says, "Oh My, I didn't see that coming." This is an important truth for that original audience. They were experiencing hardships and difficulties. They were wondering if being a follower of Jesus Christ was worth all the family grief they received; whether or not it was worth following Christ in light of the property they lost. They were wondering if God was really in control, so the author right from the get-go says the One Whom you put your faith and trust in is the One Who created and upholds the universe by the power of His word.

Brothers and sisters, we need this truth now just as much as they did. We live in a world where a pandemic is taking place. We live in a world where it seems our cities are war zones. We live in a time and place where people, more now than ever, live without hope, wondering when the next big tribulation is going to come upon us. But for us as followers of Jesus Christ, we believe in and worship Jesus Christ Who has the world in His hands.

Now, there's one final thing I want us to recognize, and what I think the author wants us to recognize. Jesus created and now sustains the world—not just the earth, our solar system or the Milky Way, but everything that is seen and unseen. Every time we put out a telescope, we learn that as far as we can see, there is a whole lot more beyond it. However infinitely huge this universe is, God holds it and upholds it in His hands. What that meant for the Hebrew audience was that Jesus owned it all.

So what it means to follow Christ is to recognize that we live in His world. We use His money. We live in His house. We raise His kids. We work at His job. Abraham Kuyper, the reformed theologian, put it this way: "There is not one square inch of all of creation of which Jesus does not cry out, 'This is Mine. This belongs to Me.'"

Why does Jesus say that? Because God fully and finally speaks through Him. Because God exclusively saves through Him. Because He powerfully sustains all things through Jesus Christ, the greatest of all time.

## Three important questions we all need to ask

All this leads to three questions that we have to ask.

### 1. Jesus is speaking. Are you listening?

If God is speaking through Jesus, brothers and sisters, are we listening? We're going to learn later in this book that the Hebrews were not hearing nor heeding the Word of God. Can that be said of us today? We need to open our ears. We need to open our hearts. We need to hear and heed what God is saying

### 2. Jesus is saving. Are you believing?

If God in fact is saving exclusively through Jesus, the second question we need to ask is are we believing? There is no doubt people are tuned in to this broadcast who have never trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior. Maybe for the first time, you are hearing not that Jesus was just a good Teacher or just a peaceful man, but He is in fact the greatest of all time. There are no contenders. There are no equals to Jesus Christ. Because He is Who He is, because of what He has done, Jesus can say that if you do not believe in Him—if your name is not written in His Book of Life (Revelation 3:5, 20:15)—then you'll be cast into the lake of fire. No person can say that; only God can say that. Jesus reminds us and calls every one of us to repent and believe. Jesus exclusively saves. Are you believing?

### 3. Jesus is sustaining. Are you resting?

Finally, it is through Jesus that God powerfully sustains and upholds all things. I know these days are rough. I know many of you have questions and concerns. Your world has been flipped upside down. That was true of the Hebrew audience this man was writing to. What he says is "Look to Jesus and rest in Him." If Jesus is sustaining all things, then are you resting in that truth? Yes, it may be difficult. Yes, life may be hard but as a follower of Jesus Christ, have you placed yourself in the almighty arms of Christ?

In this opening text, the author calls us to examine what we know about Jesus and it leads him to say that Jesus is better than anyone. Notice in verse four he says Jesus is better than the angels. We'll talk about that next week and learn that even though the Jewish people held angels in high regard—and they should because they are amazing creatures—they can in no way be compared to Jesus, the greatest of all time.

Listen friends, the verdict is in. Can you see why Jesus is worthy of so much more credit than the world gives Him? That's why we, like this original audience of Hebrews, need to fix our eyes on Jesus. Take your eyes off what is going on in the world and focus in on Jesus. This Jesus Who speaks to us, this Jesus Who save us, this Jesus Who sustains us—fix our eyes on Him, *"the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God"*—the greatest place of honor and prestige.

Jesus is enthroned in glory, being worshiped by myriads and myriads of angels. Why? Because Jesus is the greatest of all time. It is Jesus Messiah Who is the Name above all names. Worship Him. Adore Him. Serve Him. Honor Him with all that you say and do, then you will experience the greatest relationship that you could ever ask for or imagine.

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