



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Hebrews 1: 1-4

Summer 2026

"God's Last Word"

TRANSCRIPT

Good morning. Well, as Seth told you we're starting a new series in the Book of Hebrews, a glorious text of Scripture. I think it's interesting, you'll notice that it begins, "God." This is chapter 1, verses 1 through 4, and that reminds me of Moses in Genesis 1, "In the beginning, God ..."

Moses didn't try to prove the existence of God. He was speaking to a people that believed in God, but nevertheless, it was a book for the world, and he doesn't try to demonstrate the existence of God—it's assumed. And it's assumed because we all have in our being, innately, a knowledge of God. Paul speaks of that in Romans, chapter 1, verses 18&19, and how man spends his life, 'suppressing the truth in unrighteousness'. So we don't need to try to prove God's existence; man knows the existence of God. I'm not against people offering evidence for God's existence... 'The Heavens are declaring the glory of God'. (*Psa 97*).

But that's how the Book of Hebrews begins and it is a glorious book, as we will see;

1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, **2** 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. **3** 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, ⁴ having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

Hebrews 1:1-4

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word, and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow and seek His face.

LORD, we do seek Your face at this moment. We come to a great text of Scripture, the beginning of a magisterial book of Your revelation, and we pray that You would bless us as we consider the things in this book. We really scratch the surface, and this is so deep and so profound, but LORD, as we do that we pray that You would bless us and give us insight, 'eyes to see and ears to hear'. May the Spirit of God teach us, build us up in the faith, encourage us from the things that we've read and what we will consider in some depth.

So bless us spiritually, LORD. We look to You to do that. You are the only One who can. The Triune God is the God that supplies all that we need. We're responsible; we're responsible to think, and to study, and to apply ourselves—but only by Your grace can we understand these things, what we've read, and all else in Your bible and how it applies. So we pray for that LORD, we pray for the Spirit's ministry; may we be open to that.

Bless, LORD, in the material things of life and in terms of our health and safety. We pray for those who are traveling, keep them safe—and others who may be sick, we pray that You would bring healing to them and encouragement for, "we live and move and exist" in You, LORD. (Acts 17:28). —That's what Paul told the Athenians, and it's true for us as well where we come to a glorious passage this morning. And I pray that You would teach us and build us up in the faith. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) On Sunday, June 7, 1891, Charles Spurgeon preached his last sermon from the pulpit of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. He had served Christ there for over 40 years, and he said, "I have had nothing but love from Him." And added, "I would be glad to continue yet another 40 years in the same dear service here below if so it pleased Him."

That desire to please the Lord, who showed Spurgeon only love, is what the Heidelberg Catechism calls, 'a sacrifice of gratitude to Him'. Alas, Mr. Spurgeon wasn't allowed to do that. (And I probably should say, "Hallelujah, Mr. Spurgeon wasn't allowed to do that.") The Lord called him home to his eternal reward a few months later. But what a life he lived. How do we have that?... 'A life that is a sacrifice of gratitude to Christ?'

Well, we have it by knowing Christ.

And not just knowing Him initially through the Gospel...but knowing Him throughout our lives.

And by growing in our knowledge of Him:

Knowing who He is and what He has done;

And what He is presently doing for us;

Knowing that His love, which is infinite and eternal and unchangeable, is for us.

Well, I can't think of a better place to foster faith and love for Christ, (that 'true gratitude'), than the Book of Hebrews.

If we can think of the books of the Bible as a great mountain range, (like the Alps...or the Andes), then one of the most majestic peaks of all 66 has to be the Book of Hebrews. It is admired by scholars for its excellent Greek and sweeping theology. It has been described as, 'Perhaps the most theological book in the New Testament'.

And yet it's difficult for many people to follow. It is filled with material that is unfamiliar to them. There is this strange figure, Melchizedek, that appears. There is all of

the Old Testament that's contained in it: 'The priests of Levi', 'the service at the Tabernacle', 'the sacrifices of bulls and goats'. That's not religion or worship for us today—and it's alien to us in many ways.

So how does all of that relate to me, to you?...You might be wondering that. You may wonder that as we begin going through this book: 'Why the Book of Hebrews?' Why all of this attention to what we might consider, 'an antique religion'?

In so many words, F. F. Bruce, a biblical New Testament scholar, answered that by stating, "The book shows that true worship of God is not in externalities of any kind, but internalities in the purified conscience. And the conscience is only purified by the sacrifice of Christ, who not only purifies the conscience, not only purifies our souls, but He is with us, and He guides us, He leads us through this life, which is perilous, on what we could call a dangerous journey."

"More than any other New Testament book," Bruce wrote, "Hebrews deals with the ministry which our Lord is accomplishing on His people's behalf now."

This very moment, He is ministering to you. He died for us, and now He prays for us and guides us. He is 'the pioneer of faith', 'the leader of faith'...that's how He is described later in the book, (*Heb 12:2*), 'Who has blazed the trail for us.' And the writer encourages us to follow Him, encourages us to "press on", (*Heb 6:1*), to continue in that faith, in that journey with Him.

The book is full of encouragement to 'the faithful' to live the Christian life, as well as giving serious warnings against drifting spiritually...and falling away. These are some of the warning passages that we come across as we go through the book.

It's a very significant book, as I say, and yet we don't know who the author of this book is. Was it Paul? Well, that was an early suggestion. His name is not listed here—but early on people thought it was Paul.

But modern biblical scholars dismiss that because the style of the book is very different. The theology is very similar. In fact, if you were in the Colossians class today, you heard a text that is very similar, in Colossians 1, verse 15 and following, that's similar to what we'll look at here...and so you can see why people would hold to that view. But the style is very different, and I could go into different ways in which that is the case, so most biblical scholars today don't think it's Paul.

Another early suggestion was Barnabas, and the reason for that is Barnabas is "the Son of Encouragement", (Acts 4:36), that's what his name means—and he was a great encouragement to the Apostle Paul early on. He went to Tarsus and brought him to Antioch. He interceded, intervened for him with the apostles, and was a great encouragement. And this book is full of encouragement, exhortations, and warnings—but overall, great encouragement; so he is one that has been suggested.

And then there is Apollos, who was so eloquent...known for his eloquence and his deep knowledge of the Scriptures. That was, I think, Luther's view and it's become quite popular—'Possibly Apollos'.

But the reality is, as Origen said in the 3rd century, "God alone knows the author of the book."

What we know is, this is a book of the New Testament, and it is inspired, and it's the Word of God. So whoever he was, he was a scholar. And he was a friend who gave encouragement to some very beleaguered saints, (likely in the city of Rome, probably Jewish), certainly Jewish converts who were saved out of the synagogue and were suffering for the faith. Later, we learn that their houses had been vandalized, and some of them had been placed in prison...in jail.

Now they had endured this for some time, but now they were worn down...their faith was weakening. The hard times had made them, 'nostalgic for the old days in Judaism', and they were thinking about leaving the church and going back to the synagogue where life was much easier.

So the author writes them this book, the Book of Hebrews, and writes, "...you have need of endurance..." (he says that later in the book, *(Heb 10:6)*). They had need of endurance...but we all do. This was written to a specific people, but like all of the books of the Bible, it applies directly to us—Jew and Gentile alike, we have need of endurance.

But the way to get endurance, to persevere in 'the race of faith'...[that's how he will describe it later in chapter 12, *(vs1-2)*], 'a race of faith'. It's not a sprint, it's like a marathon; and it can be grueling]...well, the way to persevere in that is not by 'reaching down deep within ourselves for courage', or 'looking to others for that', but by, 'looking to Christ'.

And to encourage that, the writer demonstrates the greatness and sufficiency of Christ. 'Greater than' and 'better than' are terms he used throughout this book to describe Christ's superiority to everything before Him and everything after: 'He's greater than the angels', 'He's greater than Moses', 'He's greater than Aaron', 'He has offered a better sacrifice than Aaron's'. He has established a New Covenant that is, 'better than the Mosaic Covenant', the Old Covenant.

And he begins the book by showing Christ is, 'greater than the prophets'. He is God's 'last Word', His 'final revelation', 'the fulfillment of the Old Testament'. It is all fulfilled in Him, so there is no going back. There is no leaving this and going to the synagogue, a religion that God is finished with.

"God," he begins, "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..." *(vs1-2a)*.

"God...has spoken". He has not remained silent and left us shrouded in darkness, ignorant of who we are and why we are here. He has spoken in life-giving words of salvation.

What a difference He is from the god of the philosophers. Aristotle defined god as, 'The unmoved mover, who remains aloof, unmoved by our struggles, uninvolved in human affairs.'

The God of the Bible rules and reveals. He has given us the Bible, "in many portions", (*vs1*), meaning, 'in various times, gradually, progressively giving light, revealing truth and promises to us'.

He has done it, "...in many ways...", (*ibid.*): He spoke in His mighty works of mercy and judgment, and explained those great, powerful works through His servants. He spoke to Moses at Sinai in "thunder". (*Exo 19:19*). He spoke to Elijah at Horeb in, "a still small voice". (*1Ki 19:12*). He reveals Himself through the writings of the Law, and in the visions of the prophets. He used many methods of revelation over many ages of time, and it was never complete...until now. He, "has spoken to us in His Son". (*vs2*). He is the last word.

What a contrast. God had spoken in His prophets but now, "has spoken in His Son". (*ibid.*). The voice of the King's servants is important, but the voice of His Son is more important. Through His incarnation by becoming a man, He has revealed God to us, revealed Himself to us as 'God the Son'.

He has revealed salvation to a fallen world, and in the next verses, the author gives **seven** facts that magnify His greatness and show why He can give such glorious revelation.

1. **He is unique, He is "heir of all things"**, (*vs1*)...which is a way of saying that everything belongs to Him, and it always has. **He is eternal**, so His appointment as heir is an eternal appointment. There was never a time when He was not, and there was never a time when He was not heir—and His inheritance is more than the earth...it is the entire universe and the world to come, "the new heaven and the new earth". (*Rev 21:1*).

What's more, according to Romans 8:17, 'believers are heirs of God', "...and fellow heirs with Christ." As an old Puritan put it, "Be married to this heir and have all." Good advice. Christ is the heir.

But He is a unique heir. In human affairs, a son inherits the fortune his father made. What Christ will inherit is His own creation.

2. That's *the second fact* about Him: **He is the Creator**. God made the world through Him. Literally, "He made the ages". He made the ages and everything in them ...the entire universe of space and time.

What is stunning to contemplate is that the One who created the ages became a creature, and a part of the ages. The One who 'made the worlds' became a Galilean carpenter who 'made things'. The skill with which He crafted tables and chairs in Joseph's workshop was, I think, a veiled hint of who He is... 'The maker of all things!', (Which He did with perfection.)

But the One these Hebrews had believed in, was more than a carpenter, more than a Galilean preacher:

He existed before His birth.

He existed before time.

He is the eternal Son.

And, He is our Creator.

Surely, the One whose hands shaped the universe, and who called the stars and galaxies into existence, can hold and guide these Jewish Christians through the dark days they were in. He is the very One described in John chapter 1, verses 1 through 3, as "The Word", who, "In the beginning was..."

Go back to the very beginning of everything, go back to the first nanosecond, the first picosecond...and 'He was'. He always "was". He was with God and was God, and all things came into being through Him.

The author of Hebrews worshipped the God of the Gospel of John, the Son of God. And the deity of the Son is described in the next two facts given in verse 3, "radiance" and "representation".

3. "And He is **the radiance** of His glory..." In other words, 'The glory of the Father radiates from Christ.' It isn't reflected off Him as the moon reflects the light of the sun and the glory of the sun, with a kind of 'borrowed glory'.

Christ's glory is His. It is like a spectacular dawn at sunrise. The rays of light that dispel the darkness and fill the sky with color can't be separated from the sun itself—and God's glory can't be separated from Christ.

It's what the disciples saw at the Transfiguration when He was transformed—or when His glory was made known and made apparent to them, "...and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white." (*Mar 9:3*). It's what blinded Saul on the Damascus road when he saw Jesus, who appeared to him at noon in light that was "brighter than the sun". (*Acts 26:13*).

His glory is God's glory because they are One. Christ is, as the Nicene Creed puts it, "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God..." (and if I can say this...), "eternally generated from the Father." That's a hard concept to understand, but He is eternally a Son coming forth from the Father. He is one in essence with the Father, yet a distinct Person.

4. And that is indicated in the next description of Him as, "...**the exact representation of His nature...**" (*vs3b*). This word "*representation*" means 'stamp', like 'the stamp on a seal' which reproduces the image in wax or in clay—as it was in ancient times...or on a coin now. The One answers to the other, so Christ corresponds exactly to God's nature. He is distinct from the Father as the impression is to the die, (the device that makes the impression). He is not the Father, but He is a true representation, the true representation of the Father.

If you were in Mark's class this morning, the text you looked at in Colossians chapter 1, verse 15, and in chapter 2, verse 9, is where Paul says, "He is the image of the invisible God..." (*1:15*), "For in Him, all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form." (*2:9*). That's the idea here, because Christ represents exactly God's "nature", (*vs3*), —which means 'God's substance', or 'God's essence'. The nature or substance of God,

'His essence', is really in Christ. What is in Him, (the Father), is in the Son. So Jesus could tell Philip, in John 14, (vs9b), "He who has seen Me has seen the Father."

This is the reason He alone could be 'the full and final revelation of God' ...He is God, He's God the Son.

You can now see why the Book of Hebrews has been called, 'Perhaps the most theological book in the New Testament.' The author is explaining *the very essence* of the Godhead. Books have been written on this; Great theologies have been written to explain this; but it's necessary.

Here is the point that the author is making, if we can put it simply:

'Christ is co-essential with the Father. That is, He shares equally in His Deity and His attributes. Therefore, He shares equally in His power.'

5. That is indicated in the *fifth fact* about Him; He, "**upholds all things by the word of His power.**" (vs3c). He is not only the Creator of all things; **He is the sustainer of all things.** You are held together at this moment, and the pew in which you sit is held together in this very moment, because of His power. So He is ministering to us at every moment and ministering right now.

Now both of those facts distinguish the God of the Bible from the gods of the East and the West. We have a God who is Triune, and His Son is described as, 'the Creator and the Sustainer of all things'.

Not so in other religions. Very different, this, from say, 'pantheism' in the East, or 'deism' in the West. Pantheism believes that, 'God is everything and everything is God'... 'God is the universe.' That's pantheism: 'You're God', 'This is God'...everything is God! — But it's not a personal religion.

Deism isn't, either...it's very different. Deism believes that God is a person, believes that He created the universe—much like a watchmaker makes a watch. 'He made it, he wound it up, and now he has let the universe run on according to the mechanical laws of nature.' But he is completely separated from it...he has moved on.

Well, we hold to Theism. I hold to, (and I hope all of you do), Trinitarianism. It's very different. It teaches that God is distinct from the universe, He created it all, and is involved with it. He hasn't left it alone...and as I said, 'He sustains it'. And He does that by His powerful Word, 'by divine fiat', 'by declaring it to be so'. Just as He called everything into existence when there was nothing, so too He sustains everything by His Almighty will... Now that is Christ, that's what He is doing.

Isaiah described the LORD in Isaiah 40, as 'holding the worlds in the palm of His hand.' —All of the planets, and the suns, and galaxies...dark matter and dark energy—and everything that's out there! It's just like a pile of dust in His hand...and that's really an exaggeration—for it's nothing. He is infinite and eternal...and as great as the universe is, it's limited.

In Colossians chapter 1, verses 16&17, Paul says that, "all things were created", by Christ, "...in heaven and on earth, things visible and invisible...and that in Him all things hold together."

The author of Hebrews adds something different: Things aren't static or stationary. The word "*upholds*", (*vs3c*), means "carries". He is, 'carrying things along by the Word of His power'. What He isn't doing...He isn't like some Atlas, who holds up the world on his shoulders.

'Christ *sustains* everything, and He is *carrying* it along.' It's not something static; it is something that, 'He is carrying forward on its appointed course.' The universe is not governed by chance. There is no such thing as 'blind faith', or 'bad luck'. God is in control and carrying everything to His destination—which is 'The Kingdom to come.'

Now, if we really understand that, will we panic in times of stress? No, we won't. No, I'm not saying we won't ever do that, of course we will. We do, **but** we don't need to; and we should not.

Christ's hand is on everything, and He is guiding things; this world, and time, which is the unfolding or the making of history—so all of that, time and history, are in His hands. Your life is in His hands, as much as the comets blazing through the cosmos are in His hands...and all according to His guidance. He is 'carrying' time and space. That's who Jesus Christ is...and that's **the fifth fact**.

6. **The sixth** is more personal, because we go from the Son's relationship to the universe to His relationship to mankind...from His work as **Creator** to His work as **priest**, when "He made purification of sins." (vs3).

It's really striking that the One who holds together the universe, (and its what... 2 trillion galaxies – well, that's what I've read, 2 trillion and counting, they keep upping the amount), that He would devote Himself to this one little speck, this island in space where sin exists.

But that's really His essential work, because if He had not made **purification of sins**, all of His works, (those of creating and carrying), would ultimately mean nothing. Carrying and creating, to where? To what?...Not to glory. We would be left in our fallen, ruined condition and doomed forever.

But the Son of God became a man. 'God sent Him forth', as Paul puts it in Galatians chapter 4, verse 4, "Born of a woman." And He offered Himself up on the cross as a sacrifice for sinners. When He was laid on the cross, our sins were laid on Him, and punished in Him...in His death.

F. F. Bruce pointed out that "The contemplation of God's wisdom and power in creating and sustaining the world causes in us, 'a sense of wondering awe'." What a great God we have! Just looking at the heavens, they 'declared the glory of God'.

But the grace that gave us the remedy for the defilement of sin by the perfect Life that was freely offered up for us...that causes a deep sense of personal indebtedness and gratitude.

That's what Bernard of Clairvaux felt when he wrote in his hymn, "What language shall I borrow to thank Thee, dearest Friend?" A good statement.

But there are no words, there is no language that can express our gratitude. We will spend all eternity marveling over this, and our mind will be expanding constantly, and we will be giving praise to Him for His greatness and glory in light of His great sacrifice—and there will be an increase of gratitude without end!

He accomplished a work that only He, the Son of God, could do. If He had not done it, if He had left us in our fallen, sinful condition, (which was His right to do, He could have done that), we would be lost...we would be lost **forever**.

But He didn't do that. He came, and because He did, He finished the work of salvation.

7. Its sequel is **the seventh fact** that the writer gives: **He sat down**.

It sounds like a simple statement;

"When He had made purification of sins, **He sat down** at the right hand of the Majesty on high..." (*vs3d*).

He is now enthroned and triumphant because He accomplished His mission—accomplished His work, His ministry. And that distinguished Him from the priests of Israel...for He's 'a greater priest than they'. They always remain standing because their priestly work was never finished.

The Tabernacle pictured that in its pattern: Two chambers; the 'Holy Place' and in the 'Holy of Holies'. And in these two chambers, there was furniture: The Arc of the Covenant, the Altar of Incense, The Lamp, and The Menorah were there...but there was no chair for the priests—and that by design. The priests never sat down because their work was never done.

Every year on the Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies and sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the Mercy Seat. The great lesson

of *Yom Kippur* was that 'The cleansing of people's sins requires the shedding of blood...it requires a sacrifice.' But also that the sacrifice of the priests of Israel that he offered was never sufficient. He never sat down; he stood and returned the next year—year after year because the work of sacrifice was never finished; it wasn't sufficient. A new priest and a different sacrifice were needed.

Christ is that priest. He is 'a better priest'. The author will tell us that He is 'a priest after the order of Melchizedek.' (*Heb 6:20*). He completed His work and "sat down". (*vs3d*). That means, He offered Himself on the cross...He offered 'a better sacrifice', 'the last sacrifice'.

Now all we need to do, all that we can do, is receive, through faith, the gift of life that He offers. We can add nothing to what He's done. We can add nothing to the sacrifice that He made. We cannot improve it with our deeds and efforts...if we do, we've made it 'another gospel', (that Paul deals with in the Book of Galatians.)

His sacrifice, His work on the cross, His ministry is perfect...and it is final.

He is a seated High Priest.

But He is not an inactive High Priest because He has taken His seat on a throne at God's right hand, the right hand of the Majesty on high—and that was prophesied in Psalm 110, verse 1;

"The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand

Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.' "

That Psalm is the key to this epistle. It describes a 'Prince of the House of David', who *would be* both King **and** Priest...That's Christ—He's the fulfillment.

He is presently at God's right hand, the place of honor and power—and that's really the point here. We're not to think of God, who is a Spirit, as having a literal hand or even a material throne; *rather*, it's a description of Christ's exaltation and supremacy.

So in these three verses, Christ is presented in His three offices of *prophet, priest,* and *king*. —That's quite an introduction. He is God's Son and our Savior...that's the reason the revelation is given in Him—and the reason it is so great, the greatness that God can give. He, (*Christ*), is superior to all: He is superior to the prophets, He is superior even to God's greatest messengers, the angels.

And that's how this introduction ends; Christ has, "...become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they." (vs4).

Angels were revered by Jews, so to round out the greatness of Christ to these people who wanted to go back to Judaism he speaks of the angels. And the author shows that He is superior even to the mighty, majestic, angelic host. He has 'a better name' than they. His superior name is "Son". Christ is the unique, only begotten, eternal Son of God—and so if we want to know God, we must know Him.

Those who do, become "sons of God", (*Gal 3:20*), adopted into God's family—and are under the constant care of Christ under the care of the Triune God. He's on the throne, and as I said He's not inactive.

He's active on that throne, praying for us as a priest prayed for God's people. He does so with great compassion and understanding, and that was the assurance that the author is giving to this company, this group of saints in Rome who were very distressed and had been beaten down.

And so somewhere in that city, maybe 30 or 40 people were gathered in a house and they were, as I said, fearful...they were there to hear a letter read to them that had come from the East, (maybe from Jerusalem).

It was a beautifully written letter...but it was especially an encouraging letter because in just the first few lines it told them how great their Savior is, and how safe they really are.

So, there's a crazy Caesar on the throne in Rome, a fiend—but there was a King on the throne in heaven...Who holds the universe together and He was personally watching over them. He had died for them...and He would always live for them. —They really had nothing to fear in this life.

And neither do we. Through the storms that come, (and they will come, that's appointed to all of us to go through trials and difficulties for various reasons), but through all of that, we can trust Him.

That knowledge of the Lord's greatness and grace, created in Spurgeon, (and many others), the desire to offer themselves...their life as a sacrifice of gratitude to Him.

And it will do the same for us. As we go through this book together, we will see His greatness and His goodness to us. And it will, (if we're submitting ourselves to the Word of God), create within us a heart of love for Him.

But you must first know Him:

Have you believed in Him as God and Savior? Christ is that. He died for sinners; He made purification of our sins of all who believe in Him. If you have not believed, look to Him, believe in Him, and be purified, forgiven, and saved.

And then, by God's grace, live in the confidence that He is absolutely sufficient for all things in life.

(Closing prayer) Father, we draw close to You now with confidence because of what Your Son has done for us, and You have made us sons so that we can now come before You and cry, "Abba! Father!" the most intimate kind of address to You. *(Gal 4:6)*. It speaks of the intimate personal relationship You've brought us into...thank You for that.

We're unworthy, but LORD help us not only to understand that, but Your goodness—so that we would have gratitude for what You've done...and live with

gratitude, and serve You in all that we do. We are weak, we are beaten down by the simplest things sometimes, but You are sufficient. May we understand that, live for You, trust You...and not despair.

Now,

The LORD bless you and keep you;

The LORD make His face shine on you,

And be gracious to you;

The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,

And give you peace.

In Christ's name.

Amen.

(End of Audio)