

The Foundations of Faith & the Nature of God

Weekly Devotion #2

Below is a short devotion based on the Week 2 Devotion questions in your Renew: Session 1 handout. You'll get the most out of this devotion if you answer the questions yourself first. The goal is not for you to have the exact same response, but to understand the correct meaning of the Biblical text and then apply it personally in a way that uniquely helps you grow in your knowledge, love, and worship of God.

Hebrews 1:1-3 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, (2) 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. (3) 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.

These verses are all about special revelation. If you remember from our previous class, this is the kind of revelation where God shows Himself to us in very specific ways in order for us to have a real and deep relationship with Him. Verses 1 and 2 are contrasting two different forms of special revelation. Long ago, God spoke to or revealed Himself to our ancestors of faith by the prophets. This is another way of talking about the Old Testament Scriptures written before Jesus was born. Again, this was long ago. But now the writer of this letter says, "in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son." Notice that he speaks of "these last days" not as some distant time in the future, but as a time period happening right now. The New Testament authors understood the last days to have begun with Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension and continue until the day He returns. So, if you hear someone say "we're living in the last days" - they're right! We've been living in them for the past 2000 years! Because of Jesus, this is indeed a new era of life that's different than life "long ago." What's so different about it? Well, the one major way it's different is that God has now spoken to us, not by the prophets, but by His very own Son, Jesus Christ.

And look at the description of Jesus given to us in the rest of verse 2 and on through verse 3: Jesus is 1) the heir of all things, 2) the One through whom God created the world, 3) the radiance of God's glory, 4) the exact imprint of God's nature, 5) the One who upholds the whole universe by the Word of His Power, 6) the One who made a sacrifice able to actually purify us from our sins, and 7) the one who shares God's throne in Heaven. Wow. There's just absolutely no way to read these descriptions and arrive at the conclusion that Jesus is some lesser being than God. No. He is equal with God the Father in His possessions, His creative and sustaining power, His glory, His ability to forgive sins, His Kingly reign, and even His very nature! **Jesus is fully God.** Why did the author go through all the trouble to tell us this? Because he wants us to know that this revelation that God has given us through His Son is fuller and better than the revelation we received through the prophets of the Old Testament. Those prophets were his created servants - worthy of our admiration and honor. But they weren't His equals. **Jesus is His equal and, therefore, is the fullest revelation of God.**

Now, before we end this devotion, let's clarify something to avoid a potential misunderstanding. Now that Jesus has given us the fullest revelation of God, does that mean we ignore those prophets that spoke long ago? Do we just discard the Old Testament? Of course not! Jesus Himself showed us what we should do with the Old Testament Scriptures in Luke 24:47: "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

Jesus didn't come to empty the Old Testament; He came to fill it up - He came to show what it was really all about: Him!

Have you ever gotten to the end of a good book or movie and had your mind blown by the way the author or director ties up all the loose plot ends or reveals the true villain or hero? Now, if you go back and re-read the book or re-watch the movie you'll see things you didn't see before and understand it more deeply. That's what Jesus did to the Old Testament. He's the Hero that the Old Testament was pointing to in shadows, but now revealed in substance. He's the climax and resolution where all the seemingly unconnected plot details come together and make the most sense. So now we can go back and read the Old Testament and see Jesus there and, by doing so, more deeply understand God, ourselves, and the world around us.

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, thank you for speaking to us in the Bible and especially thank you for speaking to us in your Son. When we look at Him, we see how amazing you really are: you are dazzlingly radiant in your glory and power and perfection - so far above us and beyond us. And yet you love us so much that you didn't remain far away - you sent your very own Son, the imprint of your very nature, down to us, clothed in human flesh, to live, die, and rise again to purify us so that we can live in the presence of your glory without being consumed. Wow. And, not only that, you've also now sent the Spirit of your Son to live within us and transform us from one degree of glory to another. You truly are awesome and loving beyond words. So often we neglect reading the Bible in favor of listening to other voices that merely entertain or distract us. And so often we rush through Scripture, not pausing to look for and gaze on and worship Jesus there. Forgive us and change us, not because of any goodness in us, but because of your own great love - the same love that drove Jesus to make purification for our sins on the cross and now drives Him to sit at your right hand interceding for us. Thank you for speaking this Gospel truth to us in these last days. Help us to stay faithful to you until THE last day, the day of the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. It's in His name we pray, Amen.