

When God Speaks

“[God] has spoken to us by his Son” (Heb. 1:2).

This is the effective premise to the object of our study this quarter: the God-inspired text of Hebrews. The author acknowledged that while God has spoken as well in the past, Jesus Christ is the final word. All that is truth in Scripture and in life is fulfilled and completed in the person of God the Son, “through whom . . . [God] made the universe” (1:2).

There are many competing voices in our reality to this day—some even speak the truth. But whatever else has been or will be said must be measured against the person of Jesus Christ and his gospel. The author of Hebrews seemed to have been particularly concerned for the distractions of these voices, cautioning “that we do not drift away” from the story and truth of Christ’s gospel (2:1).

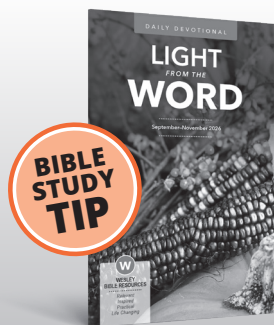
We don’t have to look far in this day and age to realize how valid this concern is. The distracting voices are manifold in the form of various religions (and perversions of biblical truth), as well as the world’s diverse philosophies and moralities. Even within the walls of churches we must be on our guard lest we drift away from the absolute centrality of God the Son and his gospel.

So as we delve into and explore the nuances and contexts of ancient Hebrew traditions, practices, and rituals, we will always be holding up truths against the light of God the Son. We will not lose sight of the profound ramifications of him becoming a fully human being, a man who lived, suffered, and died in a particular culture with its particular worldview, all for their—and our—sake.

In all that we consider and weigh in the context of an ancient, Roman-occupied, Palestinian world and culture, we will never lose sight of this transcending truth: The voice that defines all truth is Jesus Christ, God the Son incarnate—the very voice that spoke the universe into existence.

Together we’ll listen carefully.

Wesleyan Publishing House Editorial Team



You will deepen your reflection on these lessons by reading *Light from the Word* each day throughout the week. This helpful daily devotional follows the theme of each week’s lesson with a relevant, practical message aimed at sharpening your spiritual life. You’ll be immersed in these Scriptures and related passages every day.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

*By reading for fifteen minutes each day, you can
read every chapter of the Bible in one year. Begin anytime!*

september	1. Psalms 103–105	october	1. Isaiah 4–6	november	1. Jeremiah 30–31
	2. Psalms 106–108		2. Isaiah 7–9		2. Jeremiah 32–34
	3. Psalms 109–115		3. Isaiah 10–13		3. Jeremiah 35–37
	4. Psalms 116–119:64		4. Isaiah 14–16		4. Jeremiah 38–41
	5. Psalm 119:65–176		5. Isaiah 17–21		5. Jeremiah 42–45
	6. Psalms 120–131		6. Isaiah 22–25		6. Jeremiah 46–48
	7. Psalms 132–138		7. Isaiah 26–28		7. Jeremiah 49
	8. Psalms 139–144		8. Isaiah 29–31		8. Jeremiah 50
	9. Psalms 145–150		9. Isaiah 32–34		9. Jeremiah 51–52
	10. Proverbs 1–3		10. Isaiah 35–37		10. Lamentations 1–2
	11. Proverbs 4–7		11. Isaiah 38–40		11. Lamentations 3–5
	12. Proverbs 8–10		12. Isaiah 41–42		12. 1 Peter 1–2
	13. Proverbs 11–13		13. Isaiah 43–44		13. 1 Peter 3–5
	14. Proverbs 14–16		14. Isaiah 45–47		14. Ezekiel 1–4
	15. Proverbs 17–19		15. Isaiah 48–50		15. Ezekiel 5–9
	16. Proverbs 20–22		16. Isaiah 51–53		16. Ezekiel 10–13
	17. Proverbs 23–25		17. Isaiah 54–57		17. Ezekiel 14–16
	18. Proverbs 26–28		18. Isaiah 58–60		18. Ezekiel 17–19
	19. Proverbs 29–31		19. Isaiah 61–64		19. Ezekiel 20–21
	20. Titus & Philemon		20. Isaiah 65–66		20. Ezekiel 22–23
	21. Ecclesiastes 1–4		21. James 1–5		21. Ezekiel 24–26
	22. Ecclesiastes 5–8		22. Jeremiah 1–3		22. Ezekiel 27–28
	23. Ecclesiastes 9–12		23. Jeremiah 4–5		23. Ezekiel 29–31
	24. Song of Solomon 1–4		24. Jeremiah 6–8		24. Ezekiel 32–33
	25. Song of Solomon 5–8		25. Jeremiah 9–11		25. Ezekiel 34–36
	26. Hebrews 1–4		26. Jeremiah 12–14		26. Ezekiel 37–39
	27. Hebrews 5–7		27. Jeremiah 15–17		27. Ezekiel 40–42
	28. Hebrews 8–10		28. Jeremiah 18–21		28. Ezekiel 43–45
	29. Hebrews 11–13		29. Jeremiah 22–23		29. Ezekiel 46–48
	30. Isaiah 1–3		30. Jeremiah 24–26		30. 2 Peter 1–3
			31. Jeremiah 27–29		

KEY VERSE

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

—Hebrews 1:3

SCRIPTURE

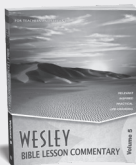
- Hebrews 1:1–14

LESSON FOCUS

Jesus alone is the source of redeeming grace.

SEPTEMBER 6 | 1

THE FINALITY OF GOD'S SALVATION



CHECK IT OUT

Wesley Bible Lesson Commentary
Volume 5 • Unit 1 • Lesson 1
Activity: Heresy Research

SESSION OVERVIEW

engage

Our lesson text, as well as the entire epistle of Hebrews, clearly reveals that Jesus Christ totally completed the revelation of God's plan, purpose, and method for humankind's salvation. There is no valid substitute.

INTRODUCTION

examine

The author of the book of Hebrews is unnamed, those addressed are not identified, and those who circulated it are not mentioned. (Helpful introductory information is found in *Hebrews: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* by Dr. Gareth L. Cockerill, pages 13–18.) However, Hebrews contains an authentic message from God to his people. The essence of that message is that Jesus Christ, God's only Son, is qualified to provide—and did in fact provide—an adequate plan for our salvation. Through Jesus Christ, salvation is available for every human being. No one is excluded.

1 Jesus proclaims God's Word (Heb. 1:1–2).

KJV

1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,
2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

NIV

1 In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,
2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.

The epistle begins with the majestic word *God* (KJV). This reminds us of the first chapters of both Genesis and John. In a helpful devotional exposition of Hebrews titled *The Way into the Holiest*, F. B. Meyer stated: "What word could more fittingly stand at the head of the first line of the first paragraph in this noble epistle! Each structure must rest upon him as foundation; each tree must spring from him as root; each design and enterprise must originate in him as source. . . . And with that name we commence our attempt to gather up some of the glowing lessons which were first addressed to the persecuted and wavering Hebrews in the primitive age, but have ever been most highly prized by believing Gentiles throughout the universal Church."

In the past God spoke (v. 1). Those messages were orally given to individuals. They were spoken to many persons in the Old Testament, all of whom are included. To them and through them God gradually and progressively unfolded his plan for reconciling fallen humanity to himself. Those messages were essential, and they accomplished his purpose for Old Testament times.

In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things (v. 2). The revelation is now complete. No other plan is valid. His promise in the New Testament is "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:21).

The messages of the Old and New Testaments were divinely given. They possess divine authority in matters of faith and practice. We now have the answer for "the present life and the life to come" (1 Tim. 4:8)! Therefore, let the Bible speak as the Holy Spirit illuminates the Word. This is our guidebook. Christ still speaks. Are we listening?

ONE

explore

1. If Christ visited our Bible study today, what do you think he would say?
2. How may we become better listeners?

Great news is about to be announced. Get ready to hear it.

2 Jesus purges our sins (Heb. 1:3).

KJV

3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

NIV

3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

This is not only the key verse to this passage of Scripture but is the victorious point in the eternal plan of God for our redemption. Christ was eminently qualified to accomplish this supernatural victory. He was appointed heir of all things, and he was a full partner in the creation of the world, including creation of human beings (Heb. 1:2). He is fully divine. He possesses every attribute God possesses. Everything God is, Christ is. He was not only a partner in the creation of the world, he is now a partner in sustaining the world by his powerful word (v. 3).

The laws, prophecies, sacrifices, feasts, and symbols of the Old Testament are applied to Jesus. "Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Rom. 10:4). He came into the world for this purpose. He accomplished his mission and **sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven** (Heb. 1:3). He conquered Satan. He is our conquering King!

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being (v. 3). John Wesley, in his *Explanatory Notes*, stated: "The Son was before all worlds. His glory reaches from everlasting to everlasting, though God spake by Him to us only 'in these last days.'"

We can never fully appreciate salvation until we see the bad, sordid, and corrupt nature of sin. Satan caused this great calamity. He made it as vile as he could. Sin separates us from God. It destroys fellowship with God. The depth of its depravity and the extent of its

destructive powers are beyond human comprehension. Divine justice pronounced the eternal doom of sinners. The truthfulness of God required this kind of treatment. The holiness of God called for this kind of remedy. There was no other solution *unless* a satisfactory substitute could be found.

The substitute had to be someone who was equal to God and at the same time someone who fully related to humankind. Through the incarnation, Jesus Christ became the God-man who fully qualified to be that perfect substitute. He was the "Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). The atonement is based on the grace of God and the love of Christ for us. Jesus fully satisfied the justice, truthfulness, and holiness of God. Nothing else was acceptable to him. All claims Satan had on the human race are stamped PAID IN FULL. Jesus paid it all for us! Salvation is now available to those who repent and believe in him.

God can do more than forgive our sins. He **provided purification for sins** (Heb. 1:3). He sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. Cleansing from sin and empowerment to live the Christian life are assured us. We have eternal life because of him. Max Lucado summarized it well when he titled one of his books *No Wonder They Call Him Savior*.

Dr. Billy Graham, in his 2004 Christmas letter, stated: "The story of Jesus becoming flesh in order to redeem sinful man is still the most thrilling and powerful message I know. The miraculous birth, sinless life, sacrificial death, and triumphant resurrection of Jesus Christ are what distinguish the Christian faith from the religions of the world. When Jesus stepped out of eternity and into time as a babe in a Bethlehem stable, it was the turning point for the history of mankind. God had come to earth to rescue us from our sin."

TWO

1. Why does God require repentance and faith to obtain salvation?
2. How do you respond when you encounter sacred moments with God?

explore

3 Christ pleads our cause (Heb. 1:4–14).

KJV

4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

6 And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

7 And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

8 But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;

12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

NIV

4 So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

5 For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"?

6 And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."

7 In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels spirits, and his servants flames of fire."

8 But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.

9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."

10 He also says, "In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.

11 They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment.

12 You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end."

13 To which of the angels did God ever say, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?

14 Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

When Jesus sat down at the right hand of God, he resumed the original role he voluntarily relinquished when he came to earth to redeem us. God bestowed the great heritage of his created world upon Adam and Eve. It was like an inheritance given to his two earthly children. He set boundaries for them. They violated those boundaries and thereby forfeited their inheritance. It reverted to God's only Son, Jesus Christ. Christ desires that we share with him in these great benefits. Paul stated, "Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17).

Christ became both our high priest and sacrificial lamb. He interceded to make possible our reconciliation with God. We dare not neglect or forfeit our great heritage.

He not only interceded with God for our salvation but he intercedes for us in whatever need we have today. He is both worthy and able to be our mediator. **He is as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs** (Heb. 1:4). He is God's Son (v. 5). Angels worship Christ (vv. 6–9). Their ministry is **to serve those who will inherit salvation** (v. 14). That service is likely at the direction of Christ. Jesus the eternal Son will be our high priest until all satanic powers are overthrown. We will then have a new heaven and a new earth. We will forever be with the Lord!

THREE

explore

1. What does Jesus' reunion at the right hand of his Father (after conquering sin's separation and death) suggest to you about your own outcome in eternity?
2. What does it mean to you that your intercessor before God the Father is God the Son, as opposed to an angel or any other created being?

LIFE APPLICATION

exercise

Charles Wesley gave us the application of this passage of Scripture in this hymn of faith: "And Can It Be." Reflect on a stanza each day this week, contemplating Christ's amazing love.

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain—
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace!
Emptied himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race;
'Tis mercy all! Immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

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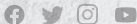
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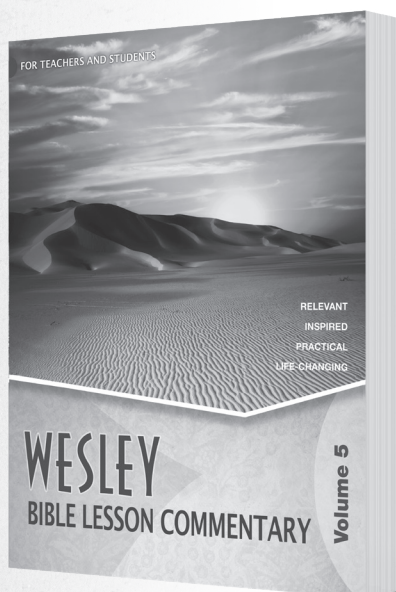
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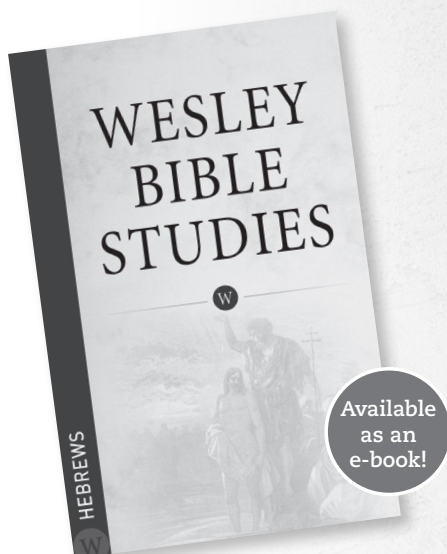
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