



EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

In *Just As I Am*, Billy Graham tells of a private conversation with Winston Churchill that went something like this:

Churchill: "What is it that fills London's arena each night?"

Graham: "I believe it is the gospel of Christ." **Churchill:**

"Yes, look at these newspapers —nothing but murder and war."

Graham: "Things do look dark."

Churchill: "I'll tell you, I see no hope for the world. I am a man without hope. Do you have any real hope?" Graham writes in his auto-biography, "I had my New Testament with me. I immediately explained the way of salvation. I also talked about God's plan for the future, including the return of Christ. His eyes seemed to light up at the prospect." Upon reading of this historic meeting, I thought of Romans 15:13, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope."



Pastor Steve Thibault came to seminary right after graduating from BBC and was part of VBTS' first class of 18 students in 1996.

During Steve's time in seminary, God opened the door for him to be a youth pastor in a local church, where he remained years after he graduated with his M.Div in May 2000. In September 2007, the Thibaults were providentially called to pastor Evergreen Bible Church in Marietta, OH. By God's good grace, they grew out of their facilities and merged with another like-minded church in nearby Williamstown, WV, which had plenty of space but no pastor. The amazing background to this merger is both churches were splits from the same church in the late 1970s. As Steve tells the story, he says, "God brought his church back together in what we call an 'unsplit'!" The Thibaults have not only grown numerically since their early days in Virginia Beach, but God has shaped them into a family unit that magnifies his grace. As Steve reflects on his time in seminary he says, "I am glad to be part of the the first graduating class of VBTS. EBC is what it is today because of the philosophy of grace instilled in me at VBTS."

Thanks, Steve and Jeanette, for modeling grace for us!



Truth for the Agora: *The Greatness of Jesus*

One popular commentator describes the book of Hebrews as “the most difficult book in the NT to study.” Another wrote, “Hebrews is a delight for the person who enjoys puzzles.” I do not disagree that there are several exegetical challenges in the book of Hebrews; however, I would posit that the book of Hebrews has one simple, yet significant theme that cannot be missed—*the greatness of Jesus*. Let’s explore how the author of Hebrews makes Jesus supreme over three OT motifs. In so doing, the writer exalts Jesus to his rightful position and strengthens the faith of the saints to go hard after their “great Shepherd” (13:20).

First, Jesus is superior to angels (1:4). The writer of Hebrews bluntly begins, Jesus is “superior to angels” (1:4). Why *angels* you might ask? The Jews believed that angels were the highest created order of God who enjoyed the position of “Counselor to God” (cf. Gen. 1:26, “us” is equated to God and his angelic counselors). Jewish theology also held that angels were created of a fiery substance, were full of blazing light, and will never die. They held that there were 200 counselors that control the movement of the stars, and others control the succession of days, superintend the rain and the snow, record every word man spoke, and guard every Jewish baby. Hebrews, therefore, contrasts Jesus with angelic beings by stringing together “7 pearls of OT thought” in 1:4-14. As such, the writer reveals angels are created beings, but Jesus is the Creator; while angels minister, Jesus sits enthroned as Ruler. Though angels are significant, Jesus is the eternal Sovereign and his position is without compare.

Second, Jesus is superior to Moses (3:3). In the first century, the Jews prided themselves in being “disciples of Moses” (Jn. 9:28). To the nation of Israel, Moses had no comparison (cf. Jn. 5:45b). I once heard a Rabbi say, “Moses was the greatest Jew who ever lived. He talked face to face with God, led the nation of Israel out of Egypt without firing an arrow, and miraculously provided for two million Jews in the desert—every day!” Hebrews, however, takes a different view. The writer states, “Moses was faithful *in* God’s house, but Christ is *over* God’s house” (3:2, 5). Therefore, since Christ is “over the house of God” (10:21), “Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses” (3:3).

Third, Jesus is superior to the entire Aaronic priesthood (7:26-27). To be clear, the OT high priest had a premier position being “chosen from among men to act in behalf of men before God” (5:1). In fact, year after year the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies with animal blood to offer a covenant sacrifice before God in behalf of all the people (9:7). Jesus, however, “offered up *himself*” (7:27), “once for all” (10:10), “and perfected for all time those who are being sanctified” (10:14). No wonder Hebrews calls Jesus “the *great* high priest” (4:14).

In summary, a fair question to ask is: why compare Jesus with these OT themes? Though this book offers a number of reasons, the final benediction summarizes the top two. First, the writer proclaims Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection from the dead to be the basis of “the (new) eternal covenant” (13:20), which far surpasses the animal sacrifices of the old covenant. Second, through Jesus’ resurrection, he is “working in us” to do “that which pleases God” (13:21). Unlike the finite sacrifices of the OT, the living Jesus is residing in every believer to equip him or her for every good work. These remarkable truths cause me to bow in humility and worship my great Shepherd—the “great priest over the house of God” (10:21). How about you? Let your mind rest today in these ancient words: *I wholly lean on Jesus name; on Christ, the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand—all other ground is sinking sand!*