



"Jesus is God spelling himself out in a language that man can understand."
—S.D. Gordon

02-May-14

Creator, Sustainer, Head (Part One)

The [book of Hebrews](#) is particularly poignant for the church of [God](#) at this time due to the strong parallels between our circumstances and those of the Hebrews in the AAD 60s as they faced the end of an age. Hebrews was written just a few years before the Roman army's assault on Judea, which resulted in the destruction of the Temple and much of Jerusalem, causing a second great Diaspora or scattering. Jewish life was about to be completely upended, and even though Christians were warned to flee prior to the destruction, their lives, too, were radically altered. They were physically delivered, but things never went back to the way they were before.

Paul, the apparent author of Hebrews, wrote to bolster their [faith](#), and he does this by showing Jesus Christ's supremacy over all the ritualistic aspects of the Old Covenant that they might be holding onto for support, but which were about to vanish away ([Hebrews 8:13](#)). At every turn, in chapter after chapter, Paul points his audience back to Christ, the author and finisher of their faith, to help them cope with their current circumstances as well as prepare them for the turmoil ahead.

His beginning is among the most spectacular openings of any piece of writing:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His

CGG Weekly: Creator, Sustainer, Head (Part One) (02-May-14)

person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high ([Hebrews 1:1-3](#))

Paul starts with two extraordinary statements, drawing their minds back to the Creator. First, he says that it was through the Son that the Father "made the worlds." A better rendering of the word "worlds" is "ages." The Father created the ages through the Son. It refers to the divisions of time, history, and culture as they relate to God and man, and whose sum is eternity. It is talking about more than just the physical world, the planet. It means that the Word created the pre-Flood age, and He, the One who became Jesus, also created this present age or world (on the same planet), as He will also create the age(s) to come.

Second, Paul describes Christ in verse 3 as "upholding all things by the word of His power." "Upholding," however, does not catch the full intent of his thought. *The Amplified Bible* adds, "maintaining and guiding and propelling the universe by His mighty word of power." We could also include the word "sustaining," which indicates an ongoing operation. Ever since He finished creating, the Word has been upholding, maintaining, guiding, sustaining, and propelling *all things*.

Anything we can think of fits within the phrase "all things"—it is all-inclusive. The galaxies, the solar systems, the sun, the moon, the earth, the tectonic plates, the weather, the climate, the plant life, the animal life, the course of human history—all of these things have been, and are being, sustained and guided by the word of His power.

This becomes even more incredible when we remember that a law that He built into the physical creation is the Law of Entropy, which in layman's terms simply means that material things break down from a state of order to one of disorder over time. The physical creation is slowly disintegrating. The nuclear reactions in stars eventually cease. Vegetable matter decays. Plants, animals, and people are born, live, and die. Nations and empires rise, decline, and disappear from history.

Yet, at the same time, the Son is also continually working to guide or manage the entropy so that things do not break down too fast or in such a way that would impinge upon His will or upon His creation of the next age. All physical things will naturally fall apart and run their courses, but He is sleeplessly ensuring that even the progression from order to disorder in the material realm goes according to plan. That includes such things as keeping the stars from collapsing into black holes too soon, making sure the planets and the moon maintain their proper orbits around the sun, regulating the natural

processes of the earth's ecosystems—all the way down to overseeing the life and death of each individual sparrow ([Matthew 10:29](#))! All of these things are in His power, either to perpetuate or to eliminate, because He created them, He maintains them, and He is heir to them.

Along these lines, the book of Job contains a startling statement. [Psalm 104:30](#) tells us that God sends forth His Spirit and things are created, but [Job 34:14-15](#) turns this on its head: "If He should set His heart on it, *if He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, all flesh* would perish together, and man would return to dust" (emphasis ours). Since He breathed life into animals and man, He could also withdraw His breath and all physical life would just as suddenly cease to exist (compare [Psalm 104:29](#)).

The One who became Jesus begins His revelation of Himself to humanity with the fact that He *creates*: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." After the earth became without form and void, He re-created it all in less than a week, and He added something new: mankind, created in God's own image. He gave men and women the ability to choose, yet all their choices are still subject to God's sovereignty.

The Genesis account of creation is very concise, but God fills in some stunning details as the story of Job unwinds. His trial brought Job low, but he was not truly humbled until he caught a mere shrouded glimpse of His Creator. For instance, in the last few chapters of the book, the Almighty speaks of laying the foundations of the earth and determining its measurements ([Job 38:4-6](#)). From what geophysicists have determined, if the earth's dimensions were different by just a fraction, and its orbit were altered by the smallest amount, this planet would be either too hot or too cold to sustain life. This Being we worship is precise in His operations to a degree we can only begin to comprehend.

Next time, we will continue to mine the book of Job for further insights into the remarkable creative power and continuing sustenance and providence of our Lord and God, [Jesus Christ](#).

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The Providence of God \(Part 1\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

John Ritenbaugh, defining providence as the protective care of God, suggests that the providence of God also touches on the pains and sufferings of persecution. To the elect whom God foreknew, all things- pleasant or unpleasant- happen for ultimate good (Romans 8:28). Tragic things, calamities, trials, anxiety, evil, and curses happen to Christians too, as well as blessings, in order to become fashioned and molded into the glory of God's image. As Christ learned from the things He suffered (Hebrews 5:8), we must also develop patience, refrain from murmuring, and realize that "time and chance" no longer apply to those whom God has called. Whatever it takes to bring God's purpose to pass, we need to develop the humility, obedience, and faith to accept.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Power Belongs to God \(Part One\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

As the return of Jesus Christ marches ever nearer, Christians need to be sure of one critical matter: Where does real power reside? John Ritenbaugh shows that all power has its source in God—and not just the kind of power we typically think of.

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