

Jesus Christ: God's Gift of Revelation

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[0 : 00] We're spending this Wednesday and next in the book of Hebrews, so do turn with me there to the letter to the Hebrews, page 1001 in the Church Bibles, 1001, Hebrews chapter 1.

We'll be looking this week and next at the first four verses of Hebrews.

Let me read from verse 1 of Hebrews. Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds.

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.

[1 : 15] After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Well, do keep that open. We'll spend a few moments looking at that together in a moment. But let us pray first before we come to look at God's word. Let's pray. Let's pray. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.

The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. Our Father in heaven, all of creation speaks of your glory, your majesty, your power, your holiness.

As we look around at the strength of the elements, we're moved to humility. And left wondering, what is man that you are mindful of him?

[2 : 44] And yet you're not a God who reveals himself just through creation. You have spoken to us. You have given us your words so that we might know you and worship you rightly.

You who have caused all the holy scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them.

That by patience and comfort of your holy word, we may embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given to us in our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Help us, whatever day or week we're having, whether struggling along under the weight of worries and real hardship, or whether full of joy and thanksgiving, help us, whatever our situation, to sit under the nourishing, restoring, healing word, so that we might better worship and speak of you.

Thank you for the great privilege of being able to hear your words. Remind us afresh this afternoon of the wonder of a God who speaks.

[4 : 08] Who makes himself known to sinners like us. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll do keep Hebrews chapter 1 open there.

And these words, right here at the start of the letter to the Hebrews, are some of the most astonishing, earth-shattering words you'll read this Christmas.

God has spoken. God has spoken. And he's spoken to us by his Son, Jesus Christ. God speaks. That's easy to say, isn't it? And we can easily miss the significance of this. God speaks. The fact that God communicates to us is big news.

You and I thrive on and need to talk. We need to communicate. Now, some of us might quite like the idea of radio silence.

[5 : 21] I know I do from time to time. But it doesn't really go down very well with my wife. Even though I like the thought of silence, at times, the reality is, I need to talk.

I need to listen. I'm sure that's true for you. Just think of those moments, those times when you've been cut off from others. When you can't speak to them or hear from them.

Perhaps it's when you've got lost. You've got no idea where you are. You're alone. Perhaps it's been when you've been unwell, confined to the hospital bed.

Hours can drift by without a word from anyone. All you want in those moments is to be able to talk to someone, to hear from someone.

We might feel that way when it comes to the biggest questions in life. Is there really a God out there? If there is, can we know him?

[6 : 28] Does he speak to us? And it's a question that doesn't go away. The Western world seems to be reluctant to embrace the historic religions, but there is still unparalleled interest in the spiritual.

People want to know. We have, don't we, an innate sense of something bigger, something out there. John Calvin once said that there is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity.

And this is the Bible's own testimony, isn't it? In Ecclesiastes we read that God has put eternity into the hearts of man. And with some sort of awareness of something other, something bigger, something divine, comes a desire to hear from that, to hear from that divine being, whatever it is. A desire for knowledge, a desire for revelation, a desire for certainty in a world where there is so much uncertainty. How do we know how to hear from a God if he does exist?

Where do we look? Well, as we approach this Christmas time, we are presented with the opportunity to listen in on our creator speaking to man.

[8 : 00] We can listen in on the conversation. You see, the God of the Bible is not silent. He has made himself known.

And the evidence is plain and straightforward as our reading from the letter to the Hebrews clearly sets out. Jesus Christ is God's gift of revelation.

revelation. It is through Jesus Christ that God speaks to mankind. It is how God has spoken. It's not mystical.

No weird procedure or ritual is required if we're to hear from God. Hearing from God does not depend on your efforts or striving or special technique.

No, we've got something better and clearer. Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

[9 : 00] But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son. Isn't this just astonishing? Here is the claim being made.

God speaks to us. The mighty, all-powerful creator of the entire cosmos speaks in a way that is understandable to you and me.

And the writer to the Hebrews details two stages in this speaking. Firstly, God spoke in the past by his prophets.

Just look again at the first half of our reading, verse 1 there. Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

Now, the first readers of this letter would have known immediately that the writer was referring here to the scriptures, what we now call the Old Testament. And the letter to the Hebrews is littered, stacked full of references and allusions to the Old Testament.

[10 : 04] The people he wrote to would have known it well. They would have known it inside out. This is God's speech to people, specifically his chosen people of Israel, the nation that was to shine forth in the world as a beacon pointing to the creator God.

His words were brought to the people by the prophets, all those who spoke God's word from Moses to Malachi. God spoke through the prophets by their spoken words, both in public and in private, by their written words, by their actions.

But what has God said? What is the content of that speech? Well, the scriptures tell a story, the story of the world, of the God who made the world, of the people he created and the people who turned their back on him.

It's the story of God's just punishment of those who refuse to turn back to him. It's the story of how God provides a rescue for a rebellious people, a way for them to know him truly.

It's the story of a special people, the descendants of Abraham, through whom he would bless the entire world, a people who would make him and his rescue known to other people.

[11 : 36] And it contains the instructions for the way of life of those who have been rescued. And yet, the Old Testament scriptures on their own are not the full revelation of God to man.

The scriptures pointed forward to a full and final rescue. The scriptures spoke of promises not yet fulfilled. There was more to come as God revealed himself ultimately in one person. Look on to verse 2. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son. And that's our second point this afternoon.

God has spoken fully and finally in his Son. The astonishing, earth-shattering, seismic reality is expressed in these few words at the start of the letter.

God has spoken to us through a man, his Son. This is God's supreme, full, and final revelation to man.

[12 : 49] His name, Jesus Christ. He lived and breathed. He spoke to people face to face. He touched people.

He laughed. He cried. He spoke the words of God because he is God. He lived the perfect life. He died on the cross, the death of a criminal. He was the fulfillment of all of Israel's hopes. He was the one they had been waiting for.

He is the one all humanity was waiting for, the one who had once and for all, restore that relationship between God and man.

Jesus is the one who has spoken God's exact words. He spoke them in history. This is not myth. This happened.

[13 : 48] He spoke. And we have his words right here in the Bible, accounts of what he said and did, and what those words and events mean. God's revelation is not the subject of speculation.

God has spoken fully and finally in his son who walked this earth. That is why Christmas is far more remarkable and significant than the John Lewis advert which speaks of love between two stuffed penguins.

That is why Christmas is far more real and substantial than even the best gift you can buy in the shops. That is why Christmas is far more real and rewarding than even the best turkey on Christmas day.

What Christmas really offers is the chance not just to gaze at a baby in a manger but the chance to listen to a man, Jesus Christ, God's gift of revelation to us.

Ultimate knowledge of God is offered to you at Christmas time. You see, man's desire for knowledge of the divine, for revelation about the truths of the life in the universe, is not to be found in the latest spiritual fad.

[15 : 16] Our desire for meaning and truth is not to be found in the latest self-help book. It is not to be found anywhere but in Jesus Christ. If you hear Jesus' words and works, you hear the God who made you.

You find that here in the Bible, in God's word. And what is the content of Jesus' words? What is it that Christmas really points us to?

Well, Jesus' words and works speak of the offer of salvation. They speak of forgiveness from sin. That is man's greatest need, to be freed from the curse that fell when Adam and Eve sinned.

Separated from God because of sin, there is no way we can earn our own way back. We need rescue. We need salvation. We need a perfect man to stand in our place, die the death we deserve to die, and defeat death, defeating it so that we might have hope of eternal life.

We'll consider more of what Jesus did, who his character was next week, but for now, we need to know that all of life's questions, all of life's biggest problems, concerns, find that answer in Jesus Christ.

[16 : 43] He is God's Son, and in him, God has spoken to you and to me. We, like the original readers to this letter, have no excuse for not listening to his words.

You have no excuse because God has revealed himself to you. Don't miss the opportunity presented to you today, this Christmas, to meet God through his Son, Jesus Christ.

He has stepped into our dark world and spoken. What a shame it would be to stick our fingers in the ears and refuse to listen. You see, this is a gift of infinite more value than anything you'll find in the shops.

This is a gift of infinite longevity. This is a gift that won't find itself getting dusty in the attic a few years from now. Gifts do not get any better than this.

As the writer of the Hebrews goes on to say, Jesus became the source of eternal salvation for anyone who will obey him. Will you this Christmas listen to Jesus Christ?

[18 : 02] He is God's full and final revelation. Perhaps you think you've heard this all before. Perhaps you have heard it before but never really listened.

Perhaps you've had the Bible in your hands but never given it a fair hearing. Have you looked at it for yourself as an adult, considering the evidence? And rather than take my word from it or hear, say, from the TV or the radio, listen to Jesus this Christmas, unfiltered, in the words of the Bible. people, perhaps you've been a Christian for many decades perhaps. Have you lost the wonder and excitement of the fact that there is a God who speaks?

This is astonishing. There could be nothing surely more valuable or wonderful than this, a God who made everything, who speaks to us.

If we lose the excitement and wonder of these opening verses in Hebrews, why would we ever bring someone to church? Why would we invite our friends to the carol service next week?

[19 : 22] This is wonderful. God speaks to us. That's got to be worth sharing, hasn't it? Jesus Christ is God's gift of revelation to you.

You don't need to speculate about spiritual matters. You don't need to stumble around in uncertainty. You don't need to make assumptions about what God has said.

It's here. It's written down. You don't need to sit on the fence unsure of what is true and what isn't. You and I have God's full and final words.

This is what Christmas is really about. Jesus Christ was born, Son of God, through whom God has spoken to you and me.

God's great message of salvation and rescue is being made known. He has spoken. What do you make of Jesus Christ?

[20 : 26] To hear his words is to hear God. to see his actions is to see the actions of God. God has spoken to you by his Son.

Will you listen? Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority before all time and now and forever.

Amen.