

Jesus Christ: God's Gift of Restoration

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[0 : 00] Well, now we turn to God's Word, so do please grab one of the church Bibles and turn to the letter of Hebrews. Hebrews chapter 1, which you can find on page 1001 in the blue church Bibles there.

Hebrews chapter 1. And we're looking at the first four verses of this letter. So let's read Hebrews chapter 1, starting verse 1. 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 also he created the world.

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, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

[1 : 19] Let's pray together, shall we, as we come to our Heavenly Father. Let's pray. Thank you, Heavenly Father, that the promised one of whom we've just sung has indeed come and dwelt among us.

Thank you that at Christmas time we can sing with joy that our Savior has indeed come and reigns now with you in heaven. Help us, Father, often weary and tired with life, weighed down by our own sins and shortcomings.

Help us to keep running the race that is set before us, to keep going with you. Refresh us all, I pray, this Christmas.

Fill our sights with the Lord Jesus Christ, whose coming we now celebrate. We ask this so that your name might be praised and glorified, and that we might follow and serve you and endure.

And we pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen. Do please have Hebrews chapter 1 there open, as we spend just a few moments now thinking about these opening verses of this letter.

[2 : 46] Now this letter to the Hebrews opens, as we saw last week, with the earth-shattering, seismic, astonishing news that God has spoken, and that he has spoken to us through his Son, through the one about whom we sing all these carols, his Son, Jesus Christ.

We looked at that last week at the very start there in verses 1 and 2. But now as we read on, it's like a firework exploding on a clear night as the writer introduces us to his Son, the man Jesus, through whom God has spoken.

And his description of who Jesus is, is utterly breathtaking. The scale, the magnitude of who Jesus is, is simply astonishing, and hard to grapple with.

You see, Jesus is the centre of all of history. He's not just heir to a throne, like the British throne.

He is heir to all things. He's not just someone who displays godly characteristics, but he is the radiance of God's glory, the exact imprint of his nature.

[4 : 08] Not just a figure of history, but the one who rose from the dead, and now reigns at the right hand of the Father in heaven.

Now, if these things that we read of here in Hebrews are really true, which is the claim of the Bible, which is the claim of two millennia of church history, which is the claim of this church, if these things are true, then the implications for mankind are significant beyond imagining.

If these things are really true, then the implications for you personally are seismic, and more important than anything else could possibly be this Christmas time.

More important than the mince pies and mulled wine. More important than your favourite Christmas music. More important, I'm sad to admit, than my favourite movie at Christmas time, A Muppet's

Christmas Carol.

It's more important than all these things. Now, perhaps this is your very first visit here on a Wednesday lunchtime. Perhaps you've never really considered the true meaning of Christmas, about the man at the centre of it all.

[5 : 32] Well, I urge you this lunchtime to listen to these opening verses of Hebrews, and listen to Jesus. He has spoken. But maybe you've been a Christian for many years.

Hebrews is a letter written to Christians, who were thinking about turning their backs, going back to their old way of life, to give up on Christ, to walk away.

If that's how you feel today, then the message here to you is don't. Don't walk away from Christ. We'll spend a few moments now looking at these verses.

And I want to point to four reasons as to why we should listen to Jesus. Four great truths about who he is, what he's done and is doing.

Great truths that ought to keep you going from Christ, and not to walk away. So then, the first reason to keep walking with Jesus, to keep listening, firstly because Jesus created and now sustains the entire cosmos.

[6 : 41] Look again down at verse 2. Second half of verse 2. Jesus, whom God has appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the world.

And then look on to halfway through verse 3. He upholds the universe by the word of his power. Astonishing claims are made here about who Jesus is.

These are not your everyday claims of even the most ambitious of advertisers. What is said of Jesus here? Well, he's the heir of all things. Creator of the world.

Sustainer of the whole universe. Sustainer of the world. These are pretty compelling reasons to listen to someone. And we'll often listen to someone on the basis of far less, won't we?

Think about your doctor. You'll listen to them because they've been through medical school.

They've passed the exams. They've got the qualifications. You'll listen to the guy from British Gas.

[7 : 44] He comes to fix your boiler because he's been trained in how to fix boilers, and he knows what he's doing. We listen to people on the basis of their qualifications.

But here's who Jesus is. Here are his qualifications. He is heir of all things. Creator of the entire universe.

He sustains everything that we see by his word. Everything belongs to him. Everything on heaven. On earth and in heaven.

He will inherit all that is his. Those that he died for. His people. The church. He will inherit. The whole of creation. He will inherit.

Not only is he heir. But the whole. Created universe of time and space was made by God through his son.

[8 : 43] Now isn't that someone worth listening to? The one who made everything. Who made you. Entered our world as a man. That is just astonishing, isn't it?

If Jesus, the one who we sing all these carols about at Christmas, if he's just another man, then there isn't anything compelling I can say to you that can make you listen to him.

But he is not just another man. He created every star that we see on a clear night. Every human being that has ever walked this earth has its origin in him.

So at the very least, he deserves to be listened to. And to be listened to carefully. That's the first reason to listen to Jesus.

He created and sustains the entire cosmos. Secondly, we're to listen to Jesus. We're to keep going with him because Jesus reveals the sovereign Lord.

[9 : 47] Look again at verse 3. He, that is Jesus, is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature. Jesus is not in some way like God.

Jesus is God. All God's greatness and majesty shines through his son. He is the radiance of the glory of God. He fully and truly shows us the character of God.

You see, when we see what the sun is like, we see exactly what God is like. That's what the writer is saying when he writes that Jesus is the exact imprint of God's nature.

When you see Jesus, you see God. Now perhaps you have a friend who wants to find out about God. Perhaps that might be you here this afternoon.

You want to find out about God, who he is, what he's like. And the answer to finding who God is does not lie in some mystical experience requiring meditation or going off on some expensive

retreat.

[10:58] The answer to finding God does not involve paying up to go to some conference where self-proclaimed prophets give you the secret to finding God. No, none of that is the case.

If you want to find God, discover who he is, then all you need to do is look at his son. Look at Jesus Christ. It's all there in the Bible.

His words, his works. The Bible is where you read about Jesus. The Bible is the word of God. You don't need a special person or special conference.

You need the man Jesus Christ as revealed. You need to listen to Jesus because he is the exact imprint of God's nature. He is God.

That's the second reason we're to listen to Jesus this Christmas. He is the exact imprint of God. He reveals him.

[12:03] Third reason that Hebrews gives us to listen to Jesus. Because Jesus restores sinful man. Jesus restores sinful man.

Look again there at the end of verse 3. After making purifications for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

Jesus has made purification for sins. That is the great and joyful truth that moves Christians all over the world to sing carols that proclaim joy to the earth.

The Savior reigns. What does making purifications for sins mean? And why is it important? Well, we've seen something of who Jesus is on a cosmic scale.

Now we're focusing in on Christ's work for you and for me. You see, our great problem is not a political problem.

[13:05] Our great problem is not economic. Our great problem is relational. On the biggest scale you can imagine. The reality is that man has rejected God.

Man has not acknowledged God as creator. As lord over everything. Including our own lives. In fact, our natural disposition is outright rebellion against him.

Now I guess none of us would really put it that way, would we? That's not how we think. That's not how we approach life. But the Bible says that that is how it is in reality.

By nature, we turn our backs. Now our living our lives in a way that seems right to us, but that ignores the God who made us, is gross disobedience.

It's what the Bible calls sin. And God will not stand for it. Our sin problem makes it impossible for us to be in relationship with God.

[14:06] The one who made us. And it's something that we can't fix. We can't do it ourselves. We need someone else to do it for us. You need someone else to step in.

To deal with our sin problem. And that someone is a savior. Jesus Christ. God's own son. He wonderfully provides purification.

For sin. That is why Christmas is a time of great joy. Restoration is on offer. That relationship with God can be restored. Jesus Christ.

The one whose birth we read about. Went on to die on our cross. In our place for our sin. He won forgiveness for us. We can be restored to a right relating with God.

Because Jesus deals with our sin problem. And how exactly that happens is a subject of the whole letter of Hebrews. But here.

[15:09] Right at the start. In these opening verses. The writer is giving us great reason to listen. To Jesus Christ. The son of God. He has dealt.

Past tense. He's dealt. With our sin. Forgiveness. Is on offer. Now perhaps this is familiar territory for you.

Perhaps this wonderful truth. Elicits not much more than a shrug. Or nodding in agreement. The great truth. The great news. Of joy to the earth. The Lord has come.

Let earth receive her king. No more let sins and sorrows grow. Nor thorns infest the ground. He comes to make his blessings flow. The great fracture.

In the relationship between God and man. Has been undone. Perhaps you have known that. Truth for many years. But the embers of your heart.

[16:05] Have dampened down to a low glow. And actually. You feel like walking away from it all. Let these truths. Fan into flame.

Our affection. For the great things that God has done. In Christ. For you and for me. Jesus restores sinful man.

It would be foolishness to walk away from him. Jesus brings restoration. That is the third great reason.

To listen to him. To keep going. With him this Christmas. And finally. We have to listen to him because. Jesus reigns.

Jesus reigns. Jesus reigns. Above everything. It's the fourth reason. Jesus reigns above everything. After making purification for sins. He sat down at the right hand.

[17:01] Of the majesty on high. Having become as much superior to angels. As the name he has inherited. Is more excellent. Than theirs. These few short verses.

Have given us a pretty comprehensive picture. Of who Jesus is. And what he has done. It is breathtaking in scale. Isn't it? Creator. Sustainer of all the universe.

The one who has stepped into human history. And reveals God. The one who made it possible. For sinful man to know. And be made right. With the perfect and holy God.

And where is Jesus now? Well he sits. At the right hand of God. In the heavenly throne room. He reigns. He is the great king.

Over all the universe. That is the reality. And we need to live in light. Of that reality. It would be absolute foolishness. Wouldn't it?

[18:00] To ignore. Our earthly authorities. In centuries past. That would be your king or queen. And now it's our elected leaders. But to live.

As if they are not there. Would be stupidity. Wouldn't it? Would be foolishness. We would quickly run into trouble. Failure to pay taxes. Keep the speed limit. We would be in a mess.

And the reality is. Now that you know. That Jesus. Reigns in heaven. Over all creation. Now that you know. He is the ultimate king. Over everything.

To live in a way. That ignores that. Would be foolishness. He reigns. So we should listen to him. Now all of this. Is quite hard to comprehend. Isn't it? It's hard to get our minds around. But the writer. Blows apart.

[19:01] Our darkened glasses. Through which we see the world. In our day to day. He presents us. With a clear vision. Of what is really going on. In history. And at the center of it all.

Is one man. Jesus Christ. He speaks. The word of God. Because he is God. He is dealt. With our sin. And he reigns on high.

He is our great prophet. Priest. And king. That is who Jesus is. That is the message of truth.

And joy. That Christmas brings. Here is who Jesus is. Will you listen to him? Will you take that opportunity. This Christmas to listen?

Why not come along here. On Sunday morning. Or Christmas Eve. Why not take advantage. Of the Christianity Explore course. That we are running. From the middle of January. Why not look into it.

[19:58] For yourself. Opportunities to listen. To Jesus. Will you listen? Will you respond. By obeying him? Christian.

Will you press on. When tempted to walk away? Here is who Jesus is. He is. He is creator. He is the revealer of God.

He is the one. Who has dealt with our greatest problem. And he now reigns. Over everything. Much to give thanks. For this Christmas. Amen.