

The Son: God's final word

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Date: 26 January 2025

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[0 : 00] Join me, won't you, to read Hebrews. It's going to be up on the screens if you would prefer to read it that way. But let's open God's word. 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.

This is the word of God. Well, good morning, everyone. It's good to be back from holidays with you all.

[1 : 08] And I can see a few visitors in the crowd. So a warm welcome to you. My name is David. I'm the pastor here. And I can also see Dave and Alison. Welcome back, guys.

And you'll be with us for a while. So that's lovely to have you back with us. All right. Will you pray with me as we come to God's word? Father, as Hebrews says, your word is living and active, that you are presently speaking to us through your word.

And so I pray that you would help us be ready to hear you speak. Give us every help to understand what you're saying.

And may it just overwhelm us with whatever we're facing. May what you say be bigger and greater. I ask for your help as I try to speak truthfully and clearly.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I wonder, if you know the book of Hebrews, if you've heard of it before, what comes to mind? What's the book about?

[2 : 22] What's in it? I think for many, one of the first things, if you're like me, you think of is it's known for its strong warnings. Don't fall away from Christ.

Is that? I'm trying to gauge body language here. But that's one of the first things I think people think of in the book of Hebrews. Hebrews, a quick skim of its contents, even the verses we're looking at today, it is, you're just swimming in the Old Testament.

Which is one of the reasons why the elders, we want to do Hebrews now, because we've just finished Exodus. But these Christians seem to have come out of Judaism.

They'd initially shown great commitment to Jesus, even to the point of suffering, real loss. But something's happened.

Over time, their zeal has, it's fading. And they seem to be asking a question. Is this really it?

[3 : 27] If we're meant to be so blessed by God in Christ, why is life so hard? You read the end of the book, and it's about, it's encouraging.

The faithful of old had to endure a lot. You're not alone in this. You hear of discipline, being the loving hand of the Father. Why is life so hard?

They're in danger of just, let's just slip back into Judaism. Let's just come under the safety of Judaism again. It offers a long history of God's people.

Religion is, you can taste it. You can smell worship of God. You can bring your animal sacrifice.

You can go to a human. I shouldn't touch myself. I don't think I'm a priest.

Go to a human, a real living priest. It's religion you can touch and see and smell. It's safe. You'll be accepted in society.

[4 : 33] I don't know. I don't know any of you who are tempted to go back into Judaism. I won't ask for hands to be raised. I'm not tempted to go back into Judaism.

So why should you and I listen to Hebrews? Because I think we all ask that question they're asking.

If God really is so committed to us who believe in Jesus, why is life so hard? Is this really it? I love church. Is this it? We can ask that question. I'm not tempted to go to Judaism. I'm not tempted to revert back to ancestral worship.

My mind does not think of that because I didn't grow up in that world view. I'm not tempted to think of karma. I'll tell you what I am tempted.

[5 : 35] To just go slip back into the materialism. My mind just goes there all the time. That what is here in the present, the past doesn't matter, the future doesn't matter here, this is what matters.

That's what I'm tempted. What is real is what you can eat, what you can buy, what I can achieve. My mind dreams of these big projects that when I stop and reflect, I think I'm just trying to build my own name if I pursue those projects. That's what I'm tempted to go back into.

It can be lots of things that can make us start to doubt that Jesus is the full thing. He's it. A bit of hardship, a bit of doubt, and some are just starting to weigh up the pros and cons.

Is your marriage really worth that effort? You want to change jobs, you want to change churches, because you think it's going to satisfy your soul.

[6 : 52] You find the achievements and applause in your workplace way more exciting than what's happening right now. That home renovation, you can see it.

Isn't that more exciting than getting stuck into Hebrew? Whatever it is, I don't know what it is for you.

I know my own heart better. But we're all tempted to just revert to what our culture says will give us life. So we need to hear Hebrews.

It's such an encouraging book. And yes, there's strong warnings. But I don't think the strong warnings are the main message. They're just the negative side of the coin. Now David's back.

I'm going to use his coin illustration. It's just the negative side of the positive message of the book. The message of the book is endure. Endure in faith and hope.

[7 : 57] Why? Because there's a key word that goes throughout Hebrews. Better. Jesus is better. It comes up repeatedly.

He's better than Moses to bring you to God. He's better than Joshua to bring you into rest. He's better than the city you're living in.

There's a better city coming. He's the better high priest. He's the better sacrifice. He's really dealt with your sin. He's the better covenant, better promises.

That's what Hebrews is about. He's better. Endure. Endure. He's better. Anything else promising meaning and purpose and hope and joy, it's an imitation.

It's alluring you away from what's better. I think that's what Hebrews is about. And I need to hear it. I hope you're starting to be convinced you need to hear it too.

[9 : 05] We all need Hebrews. And in this punchy opening, like, it's kind of a letter, but it's kind of not. The author just, he doesn't have time for saying, hey, how are you doing?

He just, he goes, he puts a bomb underneath the people going, Jesus is better. What we're going to see in these opening verses is the son of God is God's full and final word to us.

Now, why is he the full and final word? Well, verses two and three, just look at who he is, by virtue of who he is and what he's done and what he's doing. You can't add anything to him.

So that's where we're going. So if you want to open your Bibles with me, let's look at verse one and the first part of verse two. God is a speaking God.

We saw that in Exodus, didn't we? He wants to be known. He has spoken his will for your life. He's spoken, not specifics of his will, but we have all we need to live a godly life.

[10 : 23] He's spoken his will for history. This is such good news, that God is a speaking God. We can know him. I'm no scientist and I always fear when I use these illustrations, one of you is going to correct me afterwards.

Correct me afterwards, not right now. But if you study an atom, apparently the size of it, the nuclei compared to the electrons, the distance of that, the relative distance, is like a fly in the middle of a basketball stadium.

You study that, that's incredible. You should bow down and worship whoever made that. You're not going to find God there. You're not going to find his will for you and for history.

You're not going to find it in coincidence and providence. People read the star signs and people look for answers in interpreting political events and interpreting, oh, I bumped into so-and-so, maybe I should marry them.

People, you won't find God's will in providence. You will find it in his word. You won't find it inside you, in your conscience.

[11 : 45] It's too, you'll find something there of God's will, but it's too vague. I think the sin, absorption of self, it's too messed up. It's such good news.

God is a speaking God. We can know him. We can know his will. We'd be utterly lost if he didn't speak. He has spoken. And we're told here he's spoken in two stages.

Notice the contrast between verses 1 and 2. Long ago, in these last days, there's two stages.

At many times, in many ways, God spoke to our fathers. He has spoken to us by the prophets, by his son.

There's two stages. You consider all the privileges Moses had as a prophet and the prophet, other prophets are measured by.

[12 : 52] He had a visible, audible call of God. He saw the plagues. He saw the manifestation of God and heard his voice. He saw the presence on Mount Sinai. He met with God as a friend speaks face-to-face in the tent of meeting.

His glory filled the tabernacle. And not even Moses could go inside. He just hit the deck and worshipped. All that incredible revelation of who God is, his desire to save and come into covenant relationships, so much of his will.

And yet, this author is saying, it's partial. The entire Old Testament revelation, at many times, many ways, that's just saying it's fragmentary.

It's partial. That's stage one. Stage two is better. Now, we don't have the word better here, but that's the point of this passage. It's better.

This isn't saying the Old Testament is less true and the New Testament more true. It is a unified word from a unified God.

[14 : 03] It's not saying less true and more true. It's the progression from partial to full or promise to delivering on that promise.

That's the progression. It's not true and false. It's promise to here it is. Or to use Hebrew's language, shadow to reality.

Chapter 10, verse 1. When Joshua led the people of God into the promised land, that is a literal land. But Hebrews are saying, that's just a shadow. It's a copy.

It's the real thing is in the sun. We are in the days of reality.

The real thing has come. We've been in the last days for 2,000 years. The last days is the fullness.

[15 : 05] The reality has come. God has spoken to us. Isn't that incredible? Sometimes we get discouraged, though, don't we?

We want another word from God. We know Jesus is meant to be the answer. If you've been to church long enough, we know Jesus is meant to be the answer.

We want God to give us a third word. Give us a third stage. So many people crave this. We crave this. Give me some human institution to give me something on top of what the word of God says.

Give me a human teacher on YouTube or someone you've met, someone who seems impressive, to give me more. I think sometimes we seek pastoral advice.

I remember seeking pastoral advice and you kind of get frustrated because they keep pushing you back to Jesus, these pastors. Give me something more.

[16 : 21] And some look for this additional direct word from the Holy Spirit. We're tempted to look for this third stage.

And a pastor in America, a lot of you would have heard his name, John Piper, he had a really searching question for himself that I found really, really helpful. He asked himself, is the aching of my soul and the confusion of my mind really owing to the fact that I have exhausted this word of Jesus?

Have I exhausted who Jesus is and the implications of all he's done and the promises?

And have I exhausted that and that's why I'm discouraged? And then John Piper goes on to reflect on what he thinks God the Father might respond to us.

Is my word, Jesus Christ, so short, so simple, so thin that you're done with it? You've got it all.

[17 : 42] It has shaped your mind. It has moulded you so that now you think his thoughts after him. You're done with that and you want a third word? Jesus is the full and final word.

We are expecting Jesus to come back. We are not expecting any more word. We don't need one because he's full and he's final. We don't need one.

And verses two to three show us why. Why is the son full and final? I'm going to leave verse four, even though it was read this morning, I'm going to leave it for next week because I think it connects into the detail of next week better.

If you're confused by angels, join the club first of all, but have a think this week. It's along the lines that the Old Testament revelation was mediated, was given through angels.

So just think on that during the week, but we'll look at it more next week. We're going to focus on two to three, verses two to three. Apparently mountain climbers who go way up in altitude, the air pressure is so low.

[19 : 03] Again, I'm going to say something scientific that I don't understand. And inside your head, the pressure's higher. So they're known for getting nosebleeds, is my point.

Mountain climbers are so high up, they're known for getting nosebleeds. And one pastor called this nosebleed Christology. Like the theology here, we are going so high up, you should be getting a nosebleed.

And the problem with that, and the problem I found preparing, to my shame I think, is it doesn't feel relevant. I want, I want saying, more practical, the everyday life, but don't, please don't be fooled that this is irrelevant.

Don't come to church for a quick fix of the problems you're facing. What we really need is a nosebleed. We need to go up.

We need a nosebleed view of the sun. I've only, unfortunately I've only got Mount Kosciuszko to, that's my experience I can draw on, but why do we linger at the top?

[20 : 22] Not for practical use. You linger because you're blown away. You're just looking as far as the eye can see and you're just, you're blown away, aren't you?

With such a view. That's the point of these verses. If you're starting to doubt, is Jesus really that great? Oh, let's, let's climb.

Let's go up. There's something of a mirror image chiasm here.

People see chiasms everywhere, but verses two to three where the points kind of radiate out and the central point is the central point. So I'm going to start there and start at verse three.

Who the sun is, is why he's full and final. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.

[21 : 31] We shouldn't be thinking of the sun as representing God like a painting represents the person. because they're two different things.

Don't think of representing like an ambassador representing a president. They're two different, they're two different things. A better illustration is the light coming in from the sun arrived eight, oh, arrived, no, arrived now, but was, came from the sun eight minutes ago or so.

That's light, that radiates from the sun. Are we seeing the sun? Yes. It's of the same stuff. It is the same essence radiating out.

That is who the sun is. All the glory of God is radiating, is light coming from the father.

That is who the sun is. If you have seen me, you have seen the father, Jesus says. You read the gospels and he is the full display of the character of God.

[22 : 48] He's not approximating God. He's not just similar in essence, he is the same character, he's the same essence.

Moses never claimed such a thing. Scripture never says anything like this about someone like Moses.

Either Jesus is so far above any prophet or religious authority, if this is true, he's so far above anyone else.

If it's not true, he he's so far below. It just, what a ridiculous claim if it's not true. You've got to make a choice.

He's way above any other authority or he's, just disregard him. Don't choose anything in the middle. He's not simply describing God, he's not pointing away saying there's God over there, he's, he's radiating, he is the radiating glory of God.

[24 : 03] You can't add anything to him because of who he is. He's full. You can't add to that. And because of who he is, that's why he does what he does.

I hope you're getting just a little bit of a blood trickle so far, but it's going to get worse. Verse 2, through whom he, God, created the universe.

World here for ESV translation, it feels too narrow for the word in Greek. Everything exists in the ages of history.

Through whom he made all things. an unbelieving physicist, Dr.

Brian Green describes the wonder of the universe. Now, he's not a Christian, and here we go talking about something scientific I don't understand again, but entropy.

[25 : 12] Everything that exists, everything in matter, has entropy. It goes from order to disorder, and not the other way. Here's his point.

Dr. Green says, you'd think that entropy must have been lower in the past. It would suggest that at the Big Bang, entropy was in a really low value, really ordered state.

Now, that's confusing because, A, we don't really know how the universe came into existence.

That's a physicist saying that. B, if it's so ordered, you ask yourself, how did it get so ordered?

I mean, when the books on the shelf are alphabeticalised, I can't even say that word, we know how they get ordered. Some intelligent being came along, you or me or my kid, and put the books in alphabetical order.

But if the moment of creation was so highly ordered, the question is, who did that? Or what did that? Or what's the origin of this order? I was really struck by Hebrews 11, 3, preparing for this series.

[26 : 24] By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. My house, my coffee machine, my body, institutions, countries, they feel so solid.

They feel like that's real, that's, and spiritual stuff, but all those things can be shaken. It can be, it can come to an end.

Entropy will have the last word. God, there's something more foundational than stuff, and the son is it.

He was there in the beginning. He was with God in creating all things. He was not only in the beginning, but he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

I'm going to, if, apparently, if a sheet of paper, the thickness, not that thickness, but the side view of a sheet of paper was the distance between the earth and the sun, then the distance between the earth and the nearest star would be a stack of paper, 21 metres high, the nearest star.

[28 : 02] So that's cricket pitch, for those who love cricket. That's the closest star. And the distance across our Milky Way galaxy, on this scale, is New Castle to Canberra, plus 50 k's.

That's just our galaxy. I know this is doing justice, but if someone is holding all that together and he's not straining, going, whoa, this is a burden, just by the word of his power, he is upholding. That is not the kind of person you ask into your life to be your personal assistant. That is not the kind of person whose word to you, you go, hmm, I really like that bit, I'm going to pick and choose. That's not the kind of person you doubt that he knows what life is all about. If he withdrew his word of David bought existing, you'd have no, you wouldn't see a cloud of smoke, I just, I don't know, nothing.

It's not just my heart keeping me going, he's upholding me and everything by the word of his power. Is your nose bleeding yet?

[29 : 47] I know I'm not doing it justice. of course he can declare God's full and complete will for our lives and the will for all history because he holds it all together which means he can progress history to God's end.

Verse 3, there's one main verb in verse 3. Everything else is kind of detailed to say why it's so fitting that Jesus sat down.

He sat down, he's enthroned at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. Why is that so fitting?

Because he is the radiance of the glory of God.

Because he is the one upholding the universe. He created all things. Who else should be sitting at God's right hand? And to think that this one also is the one who made purification for sins.

Such a glorious one came and dealt with my rebellion against such a one.

[31 : 12] He came and dealt with all my sin. And look at the tense there. He's not making purification. It's not he will make.

It's past tense. He's made purification and he's sat down. Every other priest has to stand up and keep offering guilt offerings.

Not Jesus. His offering by his own blood. It's done. the sin you commit on your last day on your deathbed.

If you trust in Jesus, if you're in him by faith, he's already purified it. It's done. And so he sat down. Who else is worthy to occupy that place at God's right hand but him but the son? he's heir of all things.

[32 : 16] He's reigning. He's over the devil. He's reigning over the devil. He's reigning over our bodies. He's reigning over all politics.

He's reigning over the weather. I struggle to imagine, I don't know about you, I struggle to imagine a new earth sometimes and new bodies.

I believe it, don't get me wrong, you're probably worried about your past now but I believe it but sometimes it's hard to imagine is it not? How can I know that the son can come good on such a promise that a city of God is coming?

When he says, blessed are the meek, not the self-seeking but blessed are the meek who inherit the earth? How can he promise that?

How can I know that? How can the son guarantee that? Because he's the heir. It's his. It's his to give.

[33 : 24] The new creation is his. How can I know that nothing in all creation can separate me from the love of God in Christ because he's the heir.

It's all his. He's going to use all that sickness for your glory not to destroy you. Knowing he's the heir is so important.

It guarantees our hope. He's the anchor of our soul as Hebrews will describe later.

I hope your nose is gushing. I can't see any physically but I hope your spiritual nose is gushing. You can't add anything to this guy. How do we finish?

Chapter 2 verse 1 Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it. How do you endure in faith?

[34 : 39] Be obsessed with the Son. Be fanatical. Not in violence of course. None of this lukewarm stuff with Jesus.

Be a fanatic about him. God you are known by this one if you trust him. He knows you.

He's with us in this room right now by his spirit. You are caught up in his will for history and into the eternal ages.

we have to pay much closer attention to this one. Let's not go looking for a third word.

We don't need one. We don't need one. We don't need one. I want to come right down from altitude to put our feet in the dust for a second.

[35 : 49] Probably give us vertigo or whatever it is by doing this but what strategies are you putting in place? Start of the new year. I get out of habits.

I'm in bad habits at the moment. What habits are we putting in place to pay much closer attention to the sun? Are you specific strategies?

What are you going to read? How are you going to read it? When? With who? How are you going to get your teeth stuck into Hebrews?

Don't let sermons be enough. Re-listen to the sermons. There's so many good resources. Don't go googling it but come talk to us for good resources.

How are you going to get stuck into Hebrews in this series? Start of the new year, I would love to see every person in a small group.

[36 : 49] Is that I don't think that's unrealistic. If medically we can do it, we need each other. Hebrews is going to talk about this. I need you.

I have blind spots. This temptation in my life, it blinds me to the glory of Jesus and I need you to keep going.

So please make specific plans for small groups. who knows what's really going on in your life?

There was a sin I've been convicted of recently.

You're all wondering what it is now. Emma asked the question, who are you going to talk to? Great question. Great question.

Make a plan. Who knows you well enough that they see you and they love you? He's worthy of paying much closer attention.

[37 : 52] Don't let anything let you drift away from him because he's better. He's better. He's worthy of our obsession.

Will you pray with me? Let's pray. Father, we look forward to when you send your son to return and restore all things so that we can know you face to face.

But thank you in the meantime that you've given your word and you are speaking through your word about your son. Lord, may you fill us with your spirit that we might pay closer attention to your son as a church family.
In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.