"Do We Have Ears to Hear?"

Hebrews 1:1-2:4

Christmas is upon us once again. We bring out the decorations. We pull out those recipes we only use this time of year. We sing and listen to Christmas music and go to Christ-mas meals/parties. Watch those classic Christmas movies again. We make plans to be with family over the holidays and buy presents and before you know it, Christmas has come and gone.

When all those things we looked forward to are over we sometimes look back and say, 'I know we celebrated Christmas, but did I really focus on Jesus?' Even though, around this time we say to ourselves, I am going to give Jesus my attention. I don't want to celebrate Christmas without Jesus – again.

It can happen to Christians with regards to our Saviour, Jesus Christ. We hear about Him all the time as we read the Word, sing songs, hear messages – to the point where, if we're not careful, we lose the wonder of who He is. Over the next few weeks I want us to look at the book of Hebrews and explore a number of passages that tells us who He Jesus is, what He did for us, what He's doing for us now as we await His return. Jesus, the Son of God really came to earth. That's the main message of Christmas. I pray we will rediscover our Wonderful Saviour Jesus Christ. Perhaps God may restore to you the joy of your salvation which you've lost in this last little while. Or perhaps God will wake us up out of an apathetic attitude towards Jesus' words from which we didn't realize we had drifted away. Or maybe, for a few, you will discover who Jesus Christ is for the first time and find true hope and purpose in the life He wants for you. {let's pray]

The letter of Hebrews has no greeting nor do we know the author. He opens with a declaration about God speaking through Jesus Christ and then builds a strong case throughout the letter about the superiority of Jesus over angels, Moses, Aaron, Melchizedek and all the OT saints. Why them? Because the letter was written to Jewish Christians who lived during the time of Nero in the 60's AD and were persecuted for their faith. Some were looking back towards following the law because Jews weren't persecuted, only followers of Jesus. So the author of Hebrews sends strong warnings; don't fall back to the sacrificial system because all those things were inferior and were unable to save you. Only faith in Christ can save you.

And if you are following any religious system that doesn't believe salvation is found only through faith in Jesus, then you are living a directionless life and will lose in the end. If we want a purpose-filled, joy-saturated life now, we need to listen to what God says about His Son and to do what He said.

This is how the letter begins, telling us what God has been doing since He created the world – speaking. The world wrongly thinks God is silent but the truth is

God Wants Us to Hear from Him (1:1-4)

The key verb of the first 4 verses is in v.2 "Has spoken". V.1 introduces v.2. It literally reads, 'God, having spoken to the fathers by the prophets in many times and ways has now spoken by His Son. He was speaking in the past to build us up to what He is speaking to us now. I think this is something we overlook - that

God is always speaking (v.1)

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,

The author is focusing on God speaking through His Word. But how did God create the world? He 'spoke' it into existence, through His Son who is called the logos, the Word of God. But even the creation itself silently speaks of God's existence. In **Ps. 19:1-2** we read,

1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. 3 There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.4 Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.

God wants to make Himself known. The apostle Paul said the evidence of God's 'speech' is obvious in **Rom. 1:19-20**

18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

Creation speaks of the existence of God but His Word tells us who He is and what He's like. He spoke through Moses concerning the Law as well as Israel's history through Joshua, Samuel, Ezra and others as well as through prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and others. But He also spoke through prophets like Elijah and Elisha through miracles, and Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah and others through visions, all pointing ultimately forward to the day when His Son became one of us. Not only does He want us to hear from Him

He wants to be seen and heard through His Son Jesus (vv.2-4)

Through the Old Testament, God gradually revealed more of who He was and who was coming to fulfil all prophecy. Since Jesus has come, God is now moving towards Jesus completing all God's prophecies, noting that now we are in the last days – which could still be a long time. But we are moving toward His return as King. His first coming as the suffering servant is complete. The first coming of Jesus resulted in His death, burial and resurrection, affirming who He was but also confirming that all God's promises will be fulfilled.

Jesus is superior to the prophets. The author was making this point to those Jews who claimed to believe Jesus was the Messiah but because of persecution were starting to fall back to the comfort of Judaism to avoid suffering. But if you go back to that which was already fulfilled you are denying the Saviour who fulfilled it. You can't have both. So then the author elaborates extensively on who Jesus is; on who it is you are turning your back on.

whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. 4 So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

Jesus is the One

To whom everyone must bow (vv.2-3a)

God has appointed His Son to be heir of all things. Jesus will rule this earth one day. Every person will eventually stand before Jesus and bend the knee willingly or unwillingly since He is heir to the throne. Paul points to this

Phil. 2:9 *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,* 10 *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*
11 *and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

What else do we need to know about Jesus?

… whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.

Not only is He the end of God's plan but He also created the world with God. That's a gamechanger. If people think they evolved through random chance over millions of years, then what is the purpose of one's existence? If no one created you, why are you here? Yet if God created us through His Son and we are all uniquely made with a unique personality, one-of-a-kind only DNA, fingerprints and dental records – let alone our personalities – then we must have been purposely created! Everyday we should wake up knowing God made us purposefully and wants us to know Him more through His Son Jesus.

3 *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being,*

'Exact representation' is a Greek word that referred to the minting of coins from the original mould. If we want to know God look at Jesus. John said of Jesus in 1:18

No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

If these readers think they're going to know God by going back to rituals and traditions they are sadly mistaken. Jesus is God in the flesh. He reveals God.

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

Yes, He sustains the world and the stars and galaxies and all that but He's also taking it somewhere. He and His Father have a plan and they are taking his people on a path that will end in glory and happiness, in spite of the bumps along the road. Jesus and His Father are working all things out for the good purposes of those who love Him. And that purpose is Christlikeness.

That's why we have to live by faith every day, trusting God and Jesus are in control, sustaining us through world events, catastrophes and hardship until they accomplish their ultimate purpose: to bring them glory and bring us into their glorious presence.

Not only has Jesus created the world and sustained the world, but the world does not realize

All are indebted to Jesus (vv.3b-4)

After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

If these Jewish disciples claim to believe Jesus is Messiah, why world would they return to make sacrifices? Jesus the perfect human sacrifice, paid for sin. Purification for our souls is available if we accept His death on the cross as God's substitution, so our souls are cleansed from guilty consciences and made right before God. Our good efforts won't save us because they are marred with sin. Everyone has sinned so all are indebted to Jesus. Now the author sets this all up to show how Jesus

4 So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

He then quotes seven Old Testament passages that defend Jesus as far superior to angels. What's with angels? The Jews elevated angels to a high position because an angel delivered the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai according to Acts 7:38
In Stephen's speech (this is what is referred to in Heb. 2:2 also).

37 "This is that Moses who told the Israelites, 'God will send you a prophet like me from your own people.' 38 He was in the assembly in the desert, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; and he received living words to pass on to us.

Angels may have assisted God in delivering His Word to Moses, but Jesus is the Word of God Himself.

The Name by which Jesus is superior to the angels is stated in v.5 when he quotes Ps. 2, 'You are My Son'. The Son created angels. The author's point here to his audience of believing Jews and probably some seeking Jews was

Don't Be Distracted by God's 'Messengers' (1:5-14)

I'm not going to spend much time in vv.5-14, but the author proves the difference between angels and the Son of God from Scripture. He points out that while studying angels or any theological topic that could possibly

Divert our attention away from Jesus (vv.5-6, 8-13)

Jesus is the Son of God, the rightful heir to all things, the one whom angels worship. The author quotes from all 3 sections of the Old Testament to show this. He quotes from the Law (Deut. 32 in v.6), the Prophets (2 Sam. 7 in v.5) and numerous verses from the Writings (Ps. 2/v.5; Ps. 104/v.7; Ps.45/vv.8-9; Ps. 102/vv.11-12 and Ps. 110/v.13). The whole letter of Hebrews is a command to look at Jesus, focus on Jesus. Don't be distracted by the very things

That God sent to point you to Jesus (vv.7, 14)

7 In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire."

14 Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

When Jesus was born, who delivered the message? Who delivered the message to Joseph and Mary and Zechariah? Angels. Angels point you to Jesus. The Bible points you to Jesus. Creation points you to Jesus. Worship is to point you to Jesus. God's people are to point others to Jesus. But we can sometimes make it about an aspect of theology, the translation of bibles we prefer, the style

of worship we prefer … all meant to be messengers to Jesus, not to distract us from Jesus. Because this is what was happening here:

We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. [2] For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, [3] how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. [4] God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

The application of Ch. 1 is now stated in 2:1-4

Stay Anchored to Jesus So We Won't Drift Away (2:1-4)

If you think the Law is binding because angels were involved in bringing to Moses, and God used it to discipline Israel in the past, how much more binding is what Jesus said? Who is God's voice and body? Do you see what's happening in your life because you are focusing on the things that point you to Jesus and not Jesus Himself.

We must pay more careful attention to what we have heard so that we do not drift away. We're either paying attention to Jesus or we're drifting away. Drifting happens when you untie your boat from it's mooring. It may not seem like your floating away because the current is so subtle, but over time you realize you are far from where you should be.

One time when Jesus gave Peter, James and John a glimpse of His glory on Mt. Hermon in Matthew 17, Elijah and Moses also appeared beside Him. Peter thought it would be good to make 3 shelters for them so they can stay together. But God filled the mountain with His glory and when the cloud disappeared only Jesus remained, and God audibly declared:

"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

Once again we come to the glory of the incarnation, the birth of Jesus Christ. We'll sing carols, light candles, read the birth accounts and prophecies. We'll do our own Christmas traditions and enjoy family and friends and gifts. But the greatest gift is still Jesus. We must pay more careful attention to Him. To listen to His words and actually do what He says. Like the audience of Hebrews, perhaps we too have made a commitment to follow Jesus but we're discouraged because it's harder than we thought. We're distracted by the things that point us to Jesus and we've made these our focus more than Jesus. Or maybe we've been apathetic in that our bible reading is minimal, prayer has become brief moments with God when we have needs and we've made up lots of excuses not to get involved in serving Jesus with each other. That happens because in Ch. 10:24-25 he tells them to stop abandoning one another because the day of Jesus' return approaches. Instead to encourage one another. Making sure we're anchored to each Jesus, opening His Words and making Him the focus of our life. This is what Hebrews is all about and I pray that as we look at various passages about Jesus this Advent that we will do exactly what God says we're to do: Listen to Him.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at olivet@rideau.net