

INTRODUCTION

I read recently that 10,000 Baby Boomers turn 65 every day. When we were teenagers we were part of a music revolution. However, as we get older, things change. For that reason I'm thinking about doing a commercial for a remix of songs for aging boomers. What do you think? The collection would include such hits as Herman's Hermits singing: "Mrs. Brown, You've got a lovely walker." Or who can forget this classic by the Bee Gees: "How do you mend a broken hip?" Also on this collection you get Roberta Flack's soul-stirring ballad: "The First Time Ever I Forgot your Face." And Paul Simon's rendition of "50 Ways to Lose your Liver." You'll also receive the king of soul music, Mr. Marvin Gaye, singing: "I Heard it Through the Grape Nuts." Included in this collection is the hit by the Scandinavian group Abba singing: "Denture Queen." And for girl power you get Helen Reddy singing, "I am Woman, hear me snore!" Finally, to round out this amazing CD, you'll get the legendary Ringo Starr singing: "I Get By with a Little Help from Depends." Don't wait. And if you order today, we'll double your order and send you a package of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band Aids." Call now! Operators are standing by!

Generations come and go, and music styles come and go, but the book of Hebrews tells us "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (Hebrews 13:8)

Today we begin a verse-by-verse study of the wonderful epistle to the Hebrews. For husbands and wives, if you ever have a disagreement over whose job it is to brew the coffee every morning, the Bible says it's the husband's job. This says Hebrews, not Shebrews!

Only God knows who wrote this book. In the King James Version, the heading says, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews." But those headings above each book in the Bible weren't part of the original Bible. Someone added it, because the ideas in Hebrews are similar to the writings of Paul's other letters. But Paul began every one of his letters by identifying himself in the salutation. Like, "Paul, and apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ to the saints in Corinth." His usual greeting was "grace and peace be unto you." This letter has neither his name nor his trademark greeting.

There are many theories about whom the actual author is, some say Barnabas, Apollo, or even Aquila might have written it. But I won't go into the theories because when it comes down to it, God is the author of all of scripture. Whoever may be the writer; he or she got one thing right—that Jesus Christ is BETTER than anything or anyone else. The word "better" appears thirteen times in the book.

Our theme for the series is "Eyes on Jesus" and it comes from Hebrews 12 where the writer reminds us we are all in a race. And a good runner keeps his or her eyes on the prize. Our key verse is Hebrews 12:2: "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith."

As we begin in Hebrews 1:1, there is no greeting or salutation; the writer just jumps right in to truth about Jesus. There's no gentle introduction. The writer opens with an in-your-face fire hydrant of truth that immediately soaks your soul with five amazing aspects of the character and nature of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:1-3. "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance [Shekinah] 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."

Every epistle is written to address a problem. In this case, these second generation believers were struggling. Jesus hadn't returned. They were being persecuted. Some were drifting away and dropping out. We live in a time when thousands of people keep their names on church rolls, but they never show up, give, or serve. Our world is exploding with violence, and many people who once claimed to follow Jesus are losing heart. They are in danger of drifting away and dropping out. The writer reminds the readers to quit looking at world conditions and to put their eyes on Jesus. As we sang earlier, "Turn your eyes on Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face. And the things—bad things—terrible things—of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace." Let's turn our eyes on Jesus and learn five truths that will give you hope and faith.

1. Jesus is God's final word to the world

We read, "In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son," Throughout history, God has spoken in many different ways. He spoke angels, and through a burning bush, He spoke through dreams, and even spoke through Balaam's donkey. He spoke through the Urim and Thummim in the High Priest's breastplate.

However, God's main communication method was through the Old Testament prophets. But once Jesus came to planet earth God said, "This is my final way to talk to you, through my Son, Jesus."

Since Jesus, there have been others who have claimed they got the final message. Six hundred years after Jesus was born in Bethlehem, an Arabian man named Muhammad claimed to have received a final message from God. He wrote it down in the Qur'an. He claimed his revelation superseded that of Isa, or Jesus, who was considered a great prophet.

In 1830, Joseph Smith claimed he received a more final revelation from God. It is called the Book of Mormon. But with apologies to the Muslims and the Mormons, Jesus is the final Word from God.

God is still giving fresh new illumination to the study of His Word, but it's important to understand that God isn't giving in any new revelation of His Word. So when you hear anyone saying "God told me something" you should be very skeptical unless what they say completely agrees with scripture.

Let me add a word of gentle warning here. One of the most popular devotional books of the past few years is *Jesus Calling*. In these books, Sarah Young writes as if Jesus is speaking directly to the reader. I've used it before, and my wife uses it. It can be encouraging. But if you ever imagine for one moment that these are actually words of Jesus, then you can be led astray. Jesus

calling is a compilation of the thoughts of a middle-aged missionary who loves Jesus. She never claims that what she writes is on the same inspirational level of scripture, but many of her readers believe her words are straight from Jesus.

There is a warning on the last page of the Bible in Revelation. It says if anyone adds to the words of this prophecy, that God will add to him or her the plagues listed in the book.

2. Jesus made and maintains everything in the universe

The Bible says, "through whom he made the universe...sustaining all things by his powerful word." It's important to remember that Jesus made claims about Himself that no other religious leader claimed. He said, "Before Abraham was, I am." The Bible says Jesus was present at the Creation of the Universe. In Genesis, God said, "Let US make man in our own image." In John 1 the Bible says, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that was made."

Jesus was there when God gave the Word, "Let there be light and there was light."

This is supported by what we read in Colossians 1. The Bible says, "For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:16-17)

Not only is Jesus the creator of all things, the Bible also says, "in him all things hold together" The word is *sunestimei*, which means "to stick together; to cohere." It means Jesus is the super glue of all matter. He is the duct tape of the Universe.

Have you ever wondered what keeps the universe together? Why doesn't the earth go spinning off into space, or why doesn't the moon crash into the earth? Why doesn't all of matter just explode or implode into some black hole?

That's a question scientists have been studying for many years. They claim all matter large and small is composed of particles, atoms, which are broken down into smaller particles called neutrons, protons, electrons and...croustons (just to see if you were paying attention). Nuclear physicists have discovered even smaller particles called quarks. These quarks provide the cohesion for the atomic structure.

Physics is a very complicated science, but let me give you a physics for dummies review. Scientists have examined what holds matter together and they have come up with a combination of four forces. These are often called the Four Fundamental Forces. They are identified as Electromagnetism, Weak interaction, Strong Interaction, and Gravitation. They don't really understand HOW and WHY the strong force holds things together; they just know that something or someone is exerting a massive force binding atoms, molecules, and matter.

For decades, Christian scientists have seen a connection between this strong force and Colossians 1:17 where the Bible says that in Jesus, all things hold together.

For thirty years Stanford graduate Dr. Lambert Dolphin performed research in physics. Here's what he thinks about this strong force: "This passage can be applied to the structure of the atom, for example. The nucleus of every atom is held together by what physicists call 'weak' and 'strong' forces. God dynamically sustains the universe, including the atoms themselves. They are 'stable' only because force from the spiritual realm is being supplied into the physical nuclear binding fields. Whatever we may think of God and physics, the Bible leaves us with no room to doubt that God does care about the sparrow that falls to the ground, the widow, the orphan, and the homeless. He does not lose track of His children and watches over them with infinite, patient, intimate Fatherly care. He sustains the universe by His mighty word of power." (*What Holds the Universe Together?*)

So Jesus made the world and everything in it, and He sustains it by his power.

3. Jesus perfectly reflects God's glory and character

Our text says, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being." The word "radiance" refers to the Shekinah glory of God. The word Shekinah means "brilliant shining glory." It was the word used to describe the presence of God in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. Since the Shekinah is no longer in the Temple, the shining presence of God is in Jesus.

A picture may not always give us an accurate likeness. A lady who went to a photography studio to have some pictures made. When she got the proofs, she didn't like any of them. She stormed back into the studio and said to the photographer, "I don't like these pictures, they don't do me justice!" To which the photographer said, "Lady, you don't need justice, you need mercy!"

A little boy who scribbling away drawing a picture. He was hunched over his work, using different colored pencils. His dad came up and said, "Son, what are you drawing?" He said, "I'm drawing a picture of God." His dad smiled and said, "But, Son, nobody knows what God looks like." The kid kept drawing and said, "They will when I finish!"

God is Spirit, and therefore, He is invisible to the human eye. But God chose to reveal Himself to us, and He did it by putting on flesh and walking in our midst. No man has ever seen God, but many people saw Jesus Christ. But when men looked at Jesus, they saw a good representation of God. The Pharisees demanded of Jesus, "Show us the Father!" Jesus said, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father." (John 14:9)

4. Jesus is the only One who can cleanse sinners

The Bible says, "After he had provided purification for sins..." We're going to see in this book that the blood of bulls and rams could NEVER make atonement for sins. Only a sinless sacrifice could cleanse us.

Let's think about the words pure and polluted. I wouldn't drink polluted water; I crave pure water. The problem is we're all polluted from the inside out: That's sin. Jesus is the only man who walked on the planet who was morally and spiritually pure. He took our pollution into his pure body and in exchange gave us His purity. His grace; His forgiveness.

We're all sinners. I'm so glad God didn't send us a do-it-yourself clean up kit. Although that's what a lot of people try to do. "I'm going to clean up my act." You can't clean up your act. Only the blood of Jesus can clean up your life.

All Muslims and Hindus go through repeated ceremonial washings and cleansings. They can never get clean enough. But because of what Jesus did on the cross, you are once-and-for all cleansed of your sin forever. What can wash away my sin? NOTHING but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? NOTHING but the blood of Jesus!

5. Jesus sits in the place of heavenly honor

This passage concludes with the statement, "He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven." Now I know many travelers are all excited about the Buc-ee's service stations. They are huge. I stopped once to get some gas and to get something to eat. I asked the cashier where the tables were and guess what? No tables. No place to sit! I guess they just want you to fill up on gas/food/ and sugary drinks and then keep on moving. That was my last Buc-ee's stop.

I'm going somewhere with this story. There was something unusual about the Temple in Jerusalem you might not have known about. There were no chairs. There was no place to sit down in the Temple. There were different instruments and implements for worship, but no seats where the priests could sit. The reason was that they never finished their work. They were always making sacrifices and performing the duties—but no sitting down on the job!

But when Jesus made the final sacrifice as our High Priest, He did something no human priest had ever done. He sat down. He was finished. The job was done! And today, Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father waiting the time when the Father says, "Son it's time for you to go and claim your bride and bring her home!" He sits on a throne in heaven to indicate His absolute authority over the universe. He rules. He reigns! I love the chorus "Our God Reigns! Our God Reigns!" I heard about a church bulletin that had a typo for that song, the bulletin added an "s" and it said, "Our God resigns!" Nope, He reigns and He'll never resign!

So what's the Take away truth? Knowing Jesus gives us confidence to live a life of faith. Hebrews is a manual on how to live by faith. And as our world implodes around us, we must have a faith that can't be shaken, and that only comes from knowing Jesus.

CONCLUSION

I read a story once about a wealthy man who had one son. His wife had died, and the son and father were very close. Their passion was collecting art. The father had been able to purchase works by some of the masters like Picasso and Raphael. Eventually he had a collection of art worth millions.

When the Vietnam War broke out, the son volunteered to join the Marines. After several months, the father received the heartbreaking news that his son had died in action while rescuing a wounded Marine.

A few months later a stranger appeared at the father's door holding a wrapped package. He said, "Sir, you don't know me, but I was a friend of your son. In fact, I'm the one he saved in battle. I was wounded and as he was carrying me toward the chopper, he was killed. Your son often talked about your love for art." He unwrapped the package and said, "I'm not much of an artist, but to honor your son, I painted a portrait of him based upon a photo of him in his Marine dress blues. I'd like for you to have it."

The father's eyes welled up with tears and he thanked the young man and offered to pay for it. But the Marine said, "Oh no, sir, it's a gift. I can never repay you for what your son did."

The father hung the portrait over his mantle. He would always take his visitors and show them the painting.

Years later, the man died and his artwork was auctioned off as part of the estate. Many collectors arrived, anxious to acquire one of the valuable pieces of art by the masters. As the auction began the auctioneer placed the picture of the father's son on the easel as the first piece to be auctioned. He said, "What is my bid for this picture of the owner's son?" There was silence. Finally a voice from the back said, "We didn't come to bid on that unknown piece. We are here for the Rembrandts and the Van Goghs."

But the auctioneer persisted. "The deceased left clear instructions that this piece should be auctioned first. What is my bid? \$100? \$200?" There were no takers.

Finally a voice from the back of the room said, "I have been the gardener here for many years. I was very fond of both the father and the son. I'll bid on the picture of the son. I'll give you \$100."

The auctioneer said, "\$100. Is there another bid?"

The crowd was growing impatient. Someone yelled, "We don't want the son. Sell it, and let's get on to the valuable pieces of art!"

The auctioneer said, "\$100 going once; going twice; sold for \$100!"

A man seated on the second row said, "Good, now let's get on with the real auction!"

The auctioneer laid his gavel down and said, "Ladies and Gentlemen, this concludes the auction."

The crowd jumped to their feet. "What about the other paintings?"

The auctioneer said, "I received specific instructions from the will of the deceased that this would be the only painting auctioned off. And that whoever bought this painting would inherit the entire estate, including all the other paintings."

Here, I will read the words he left in his will, "Whoever chooses my son gets it all."

And the book of Hebrews teaches us the same thing. Two thousand years ago Jesus died to save us from hell, and God has been asking, "Who will take my son? Who will take my son?" And whoever chooses His son, Jesus Christ, gets it all! The Bible says in 1 John 5:12, "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

OUTLINE

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Take-Away Truth:

Knowing Jesus gives us confidence to live a life of faith.

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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