

Hebrews

Part 3 - How God makes his world come alive

Part 2 ended with what was needed for disillusioned, distracted, empty-feeling Christians to pull them out of their slump. What they needed, according to **Hebrews 1:2**, was hearing what God was saying through his Son.

But how does that work exactly? Well, according to **John 1:18**, “No one has ever seen God.” And that highlights a problem we have as Christians that easily explains why we get into a slump, because how can we maintain a relationship with a God we can’t see? If we could see him and talk to him in person and hear him talking back, then surely we wouldn’t have this problem of being disillusioned, distracted and feeling empty in the first place, would we? But instead we’re stuck with having to believe in someone we can’t see, and stuck trying to talk to someone we don’t know for certain is listening.

But whose fault was that? It wasn’t God’s fault, because he was more than willing to talk to Adam. But Adam would rather listen to a serpent. He even dived behind a bush when God came looking for him (**Genesis 3:10**). And later on in **Exodus 20:19** the Israelites bluntly told Moses, “You (Moses) speak to us, and we will listen. But **don’t let God speak directly to us.**”

So we’re not exactly eager beavers when it comes to having God speaking to us. How, then, does God speaking to us through his Son help us? John gave us a clue back in **John 1:18** when he said, “No one has ever seen God. BUT....” And the “but” is talking about someone who HAS seen God, and who CAN talk to him and hear him talk back - it’s “**God the only Son, who is at the Father’s side.**” And being at the Father’s side puts him in the wonderful position of knowing the Father intimately. He sees his Father’s every move. He hears everything he says. And that’s good to know when John then tells us in **verse 18** that it’s the Son’s job to “**make the Father known.**”

So this is how we come to know the Father intimately too: it’s through the Son, whose job it was to “come from heaven,” **John 3:31**, and in **verse 32**, “testify to (or **make known**) what he has seen and heard.” And because he’d been at the Father’s side, we know for certain, **verse 34**, that “the one whom God has sent **speaks God’s words.**” Listen to the Son, therefore, and that’s how we come to know the Father. And so well can we come to know him that it feels like we’re at his side too, even though we can’t see him.

This, then, is what the author of Hebrews focuses on. He knows, just as John did in John 1:1, that the Son of God is also “the Word,” the perfect expression of everything the Father is. In the Son, therefore, the Father expresses - or “speaks” - his entire being to us, so we can know him **without** actually seeing or hearing him in person.

And that’s the best clue we’ve got for knowing the Father. It’s in what he speaks, and expresses, and reveals of himself through his Son. So that’s who we focus on. What Hebrews then tells us is **what** focusing on the Son does for us. It’s meant to give us a picture of God and his world that’s so clear and exciting that **we are caught up in it too**. And that’s the difference God speaking through his Son makes. It’s designed to lift us into God’s world, which is exactly what those Christians in Hebrews needed, because they were being caught up in the world around them instead.

To lift those Christians into God’s world was the challenge, therefore, but the author of Hebrews had the solution. It was making God’s world so real to the Christians in his care that **they’d want to seek and enter it**. But wasn’t that the purpose of Jesus’ ministry too? He tromped around his native Judea talking about the Kingdom of God, or God’s world. Why? Because it was time to make **God’s world**, the “kingdom of God,” so real to people that they’d want to seek and enter it too (Matthew 6:33, 11:12).

But how was God’s world being made real in Jesus? It was in Jesus’ words and actions. God was speaking his world into reality in what Jesus said and did. It was through this man - with his amazing compassion for people and his extraordinary powers over illnesses, demons and storms - that God was opening up their eyes to a completely different world, HIS world, in operation.

The Jews in the first century, therefore, were literally seeing God’s world, the kingdom of God, unfolding before their very eyes, and thousands of them were caught up in it. They followed Jesus wherever he went, spellbound by his teachings and miracles. It was a little scary at times when Jesus cast out violent demons and calmed raging storms, but it introduced his fellow Jews to a new and fascinating world they had never experienced before. It was a world of great compassion and mercy on the one hand, but power over evil, illness and creation on the other. But what was really striking about Jesus was **where all this power and authority in his miracles and teaching came from**. In his own words Jesus said the source of it all was his Father. Every action he did, and every word Jesus said, came from his Father. One thing was being made very clear, then, that everything about God and his kingdom was being made known and real through Jesus.

But why didn't God reveal himself and his kingdom through his Son much earlier? Why wait for thousands of years leaving billions of people in the dark?

The answer to that is simple: God DID reveal himself and his world to us, back in Genesis. God spoke to Adam personally, so Adam knew exactly what God wanted done and how. It was the start of a close and very personal relationship between God and humans that would have spread the ethics and wisdom and love of God's world into every corner of the creation. And every step of the way humans could have consulted with God in person too, so they'd know exactly what to say and do in tune with God's will, just like Jesus knew what to say and do in tune with God's will when he was here as a human.

Unfortunately, we never got to see what **could** have happened had Adam and Eve listened to God's instructions. But when Jesus came as a human, all of a sudden we **DO** see what could have happened, because he **DID** listen to God's instructions. And what happened next was remarkable, because the doors and windows to God's world were flung open so we could see right into it.

And what Jesus' fellow Jews got to see was a world where **God was easily known**. They saw it in the amazing relationship Jesus had with the Father. It was so real and so personal, and it gave Jesus such confidence and authority that one of his disciples asked if he could teach them to pray so they could have a relationship like that with God too - which led to Jesus reciting the "Lord's Prayer" in **Luke 11:1-4**.

And why that prayer? Because it helped his disciples see what the Father was up to. Not only, then, was Jesus opening their eyes to a world where the Father could be easily known, he was also opening their eyes to a world where **the Father's purpose could be easily known too**. He was giving them a window right into God's mind.

So what exactly **WAS** on God's mind? Well, Jesus gave the game away on that one too, when he prayed to the Father, "your kingdom come" in Luke 11:2, and "your will to be done on earth as it is in heaven" in Matthew 6:10.

Well, that flung open the windows to God's mind, because the entire machinery whirring away in his world was designed for one simple, wonderful purpose, to set up his kingdom on this planet. And how was it being done? By the Father's will being done on earth as it is in heaven. Which is exactly what Jesus' entire life was tuned in to. And that's what gave him his amazing relationship with the Father, that then enabled him to live God's will on earth, and in so doing bring God's world, the world of heaven, to us.

What the Father was revealing through his Son, therefore, was the importance of his will. And why was that? Because the doing of his will lies at the heart of setting up his kingdom on this earth. To know his will is to know how the Kingdom of God operates, which is essential for us disciples to know too, when we realize God is setting up his kingdom **through us** as well. That was his plan through Adam and Eve originally, but they wanted nothing to do with it. They much preferred a world of their own making. And it remained that way for thousands of years until Jesus came.

The author of Hebrews then explains what happened when Jesus came. Jesus was God's Son, which made it easy for God to reveal his will again. Just listen to his Son's teachings and watch him in action, and there you have God's will being done on earth exactly as it is in heaven.

And to press that point home, that we can easily know God's will because it was revealed to us in his Son, the author of Hebrews then says in **Hebrews 1:3**, "After he (the Son of God) had provided purification for sins, **he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.**"

So if anyone knows "his Majesty" the Father's will it's his Son, because he's right there with him. But he's also **administering** God's will too as his Father's right hand man. He's at the very nerve centre of the Father's entire operation.

And why has the Father placed him in that position? To get us back on track to what he originally intended for us humans in Genesis. It's back to equipping humans to rule over the earth by having us know and establish God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven.

Which means, of course, that we humans need to know God's will. But this is where Hebrews jumps in again, to let us know that God's will is not being revealed through prophets and angels anymore like it was in the Old Testament. In this era, "the last days" (Hebrews 1:2), the Father's will is being revealed through his Son now residing at his side, because, as **Hebrews 1:4** says, "**This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels**, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names."

His Majesty the Father wants us totally focused on his Son as the revealer of his will, not on angels, because "to which of the angels," **Hebrews 1:5**, "did God ever say, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father'? Or again, 'I will be his Father, and he will be my Son?'" And both those questions are actual quotes from the Old Testament too, from Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14, so this wasn't new knowledge.

But why mention those two verses in particular? Because they both relate to the position the Son of God is now in. Both of those quotes are about the royal rule of King David through his son. That was their original intent, but the author of Hebrews is fully aware that those verses also pictured the royal rule of God's kingdom through HIS Son. So what God is now speaking through his Son is what those two verses were actually talking about all along, that the Father had chosen his Son to be the Ruler of his Kingdom on earth, and no one else.

Nowhere in the Old Testament was an angel, even the greatest angel, given the title by God, "Ruler of my Kingdom." Only God's Son inherited that title, not only because he was the rightful heir to it being God's Son, but also because he qualified to become ruler since he'd proved, unlike Adam and Eve, that he **would** do God's will on earth as it is in heaven, even if it meant dying horribly on a cross.

It means, then, that in God's Son we now have God's kingdom being established on this earth with a **fully qualified ruler** who knows God's will. No wonder, then, Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of God wherever he went, because it was setting up God's Kingdom on earth that the Father had sent him to do - first by preaching about it and demonstrating it, and then by qualifying to rule it by obeying God's will even to death on the cross.

So, if you were a Christian in Hebrews listening to all this, what would you be thinking? Hopefully it would be the realization that what God had created humans for in the first place, that we failed to realize in Genesis, was now back on track again after thousands of years in dormancy. The Kingdom of God was being set up on this earth again, and this time with a ruler that his Majesty the Father had given his full approval and authority to.

And this is what the minds of us Christians has been opened to, so we can see the Father's purpose and want to be instrumental in setting up his kingdom on earth as well. We understand what the Father is speaking to us through his Son, that because of the position his Son is now in as ruler of his Kingdom on this planet, the doors have been flung open to God's world for us to see it, enter it, experience it and live it, because in so doing we can make that kingdom real to others, just like Jesus did.

But there was a problem for those Christians in Hebrews to grasp all this, because they were Jews, and all through their history it had so often been ANGELS whom God had spoken through. As Jews, therefore, they believed angels were God's messengers, and angels were the ones to whom God had given the authority to speak his will.

It's not surprising, then, that even as Christians they were having trouble understanding the importance of God speaking through his Son, when it was an angel who'd led their ancestors out of Egypt (Exodus 14:19), and an angel who'd led them through the wilderness (Exodus 23:20-23). God had even administered his law at Mount Sinai through angels (Acts 7:53, Galatians 3:19). And angels had both the power to save lives (Psalm 34:7) and destroy them (Psalm 78:49, 2 Samuel 24:15-17, 2 Kings 19:35). So when an angel spoke the Israelites listened, because up to the time of Jesus **"the message spoken by angels was binding," Hebrews 2:2**. The Israelites, therefore, were used to God speaking and revealing his will with absolute authority through angels.

So what does the author of Hebrews do about that? Well, like a true pastor he goes straight to Scripture. In **Hebrews 1:6** he quotes a key passage from the best Greek translation of the Old Testament of the time (the Septuagint) to show that even as far back as **Deuteronomy 32:43** God said of his Son, "Let all God's angels worship him." It was the perfect reminder from their own scriptures, therefore, that God's Son was superior to the angels. He then takes a quote from Psalm 104:4 about the "winds" and "fire" being messengers of God and applies it to the angels being messengers of God too, BUT, same verse, they're still "servants." The angels' job in God's Kingdom is to serve, in other words, not rule. The job of ruling goes to God's Son and to no one else.

And the time of his rulership had begun too, so the only absolute authority God would be speaking through from now on would be his Son. No longer would God be speaking or giving messages to people through angels. For a while after Jesus was resurrected God still spoke through angels, as we see in "an angel of the Lord" speaking to Philip in Acts 8:26, and an angel speaking to Paul in Acts 27:23, and to John in Revelation 1:1, but note in verse 2 that the focus of the message was "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Which is exactly the focus of Hebrews, that in these last days what we should be focusing on as Christians is God speaking and making himself known through the "Word" of God, his Son, Jesus Christ, and not through any other source. The idea being promoted by many Christians today, then, that God speaks to us through angels, prophets, dreams, visions, prophecies, words of knowledge, voices in our head, special revelations and other assorted manifestations, may have been true for a while after Jesus was resurrected, but only until it was clear what God was saying, which then became the New Testament. And with the New Testament we had all we needed to know about God's will. It was the final word. We didn't need messages and revelations from angels, or from any other source anymore. Even the Holy Spirit reveals only what God has made known through his Son (John 16:14).

And the reason the Holy Spirit is making known what the Father is speaking through his Son is because the Father is only revealing his will through his Son, and we need to know that because our calling is to be instruments in his hands for illustrating and establishing his will on earth - just as it is in heaven.

And if that's hard for us to understand or get excited about, it sounds like the Christians in Hebrews were having trouble understanding and getting excited about it too. So the author of Hebrews goes for the jugular with three more of their scriptures, all from the Old Testament again, and all proving his point about concentrating on the Son, not angels (or anything else), as the only true source of God's word and will.

The first of those three scriptures was Psalm 45:6-7. The author of Hebrews introduces it in **Hebrews 1:8** with the words, "But **about the Son**, he says..." So these two verses in Psalm 45 are a direct reference to God's Son, even as far back as Psalms. But the real shocker is verse 5, because in describing the Son it starts off with "Your throne, O God..." meaning **the Son is God too** - AND he's on God's throne, meaning he has all **the authority of God** as well.

What better proof could there be, therefore, of the Son's supremacy over angels? So, come on Christians in Hebrews, get with the program. Angels aren't on God's throne, and nor are they God, so why look to angels for messages from God? We could ask the same question of us Christians today too, of course, as to why we'd seek messages from angels, or other manifestations that may or may not be from God, when the one chosen by God to speak and reveal all that we need to know about his word and will is **also God**?

What a time-saver. We can chuck out all that other nonsense being pushed by people who think they have special spiritual insight and messages from the Lord and so-called manifestations of the Spirit, and focus instead on the simplicity that is in Christ, that God spoke through him and him alone as the most credible and certain way of knowing his will. Hebrews does us a great favour, therefore, in clearing out the fog and nonsense we see so much of in Christianity today.

So I get the obvious point in Hebrews that God is speaking through his Son, but it begs the obvious question: "But **WHAT** is God saying to us through him?" Well, carry on in **Hebrews 1:8** (still quoting Psalm 45), "But about the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the sceptre of your kingdom. **You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.**'" And it's for that reason, **Hebrews 1:9**, that "God has set you (the Son) above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."

So this is what set the Son aside as supreme in God's estimation: it was his Son's love of righteousness and hatred of wickedness. This is what qualified the Son for rulership in his Kingdom. But the context is still what God is speaking to us through his Son, so what is he saying to us in his Son loving righteousness and hating wickedness?

He's saying this is what his kingdom, his world, is all about. It's not about weird manifestations of the Spirit or hearing messages from your guardian angel, it's about a deep love for God's word and will and a deep loathing for anything that opposes it. And we know what God's word and will is, because it was expressed and lived in its entirety by Jesus. He's our perfect example of God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven. So that's what the Holy Spirit makes clear to us, because it's by us knowing God's will and tuning into it, just like Jesus did, that we are in the kingdom of God experiencing it with him, which is exactly what Jesus prayed for in John 17.

But what does that last bit in **Hebrews 1:9** tell us, that God "anointed his Son with the oil of joy"? It's another quote from Psalm 45, which was originally a song written for a king's wedding, but also a song meant for Jesus and his bride, meaning us Christians. Well, anointing his Son with the oil of joy means God has given us a pretty good husband, because it's joy he brings into the marriage. It's what Jesus prayed we'd experience too, in **John 17:11**, "that they may have the full measure of my joy within them." How? Next verse, "I have given them your word." So it still comes back to God's word and will being revealed through Jesus and our minds being tuned to that by the Holy Spirit.

For Christians having a tough time in this world, then, this was the answer in Hebrews. It was making God's world come alive by concentrating their attention on his Son, because everything God spoke and did through his Son had one purpose in mind, to open up the windows of their minds to the Kingdom of God, God's world, and knowing that his Son was now ruling that kingdom and was, therefore, perfectly positioned to help them see it and lift them into it too.

And it's from his example that we know what lifted Jesus into that world through all the agonies of this world that he went through. It was loving righteousness and hating wickedness, or put another way, loving God's word and will and loathing anything opposed to it. That's how God makes his world come alive, and if Adam and Eve had grasped that in the Garden of Eden we'd all be living in God's kingdom already. But because Jesus provided purification for our sin, the door has been flung open for us to enter his kingdom again - and thanks to the book of Hebrews we know how.