

JESUS, THE IMPRINT OF GOD'S BEING

Hebrews 1:1-4

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WATCH/LISTEN: <http://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/jesus-the-imprint-of-gods-being/>

Most people don't really reject Jesus Christ; they usually reject a distorted caricature of Christ. We don't know a lot about who wrote the Book of Hebrews or to whom. But we do know that believers were going through a very rough time, a confusing time. And more than anything, they needed to see Jesus clearly—his saving work, his powerful work. And if they saw Jesus clearly, they knew they would see God!

There is, you know, this deep, deep longing in our hearts to know God. We may not recognize it as such, but it's there. (He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, v. 3). The metaphor is one of a coin being minted, in which the exact image of the Emperor is cast. It is a clear-cut impression. The Son perfectly mirrors God" (The Message). If you want to see God, look at Jesus. If you want to know God, get to know Jesus.

The Hebrews author holds up Jesus Christ and allows him to shimmer in the light like a diamond. Each turn shows something different and rich. He's the cosmic Christ, (heir of all things, created the worlds, sustains it all by his word). Don't you know that this word was comforting in a time of confusion and chaos, persecution and struggle in the early church? Isn't it encouraging in our mixed-up world? The One who made the world is in charge.

God is doing some things in this world that are amazing. In Ukraine, we've seen dramatic growth in the seminary with which we partner in Ukraine. The same explosive growth in our partner church. And the key to understanding all that God is doing in this world is Jesus Christ, the exact imprint of God.

But as comforting as the global, cosmic message is, how much more beautiful is the personal ministry of Jesus Christ, in his role dealing with our sin and guilt and shame. (Christ purifying/cleansing us, v. 3). And what a mystery—Jesus is both the priest and the offering (sacrifice). And look what Jesus did after he washed us. He sat down. Do you know why Jesus sat down? Because he was done! He had completed his assignment! In the Old Testament, the priests had to stand there and repeat their sacrifices over and over again. Not Jesus! He sat down and said, "It is finished." The one who stands at the beginning and end of history took care of it all, and then he sat down! The shame is gone, the guilt, the burden, the sin. All gone.

God, who has spoken in various ways, in these last days has spoken through His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the express image, the exact imprint, of the Father. Here is the simplest answer to those of us troubled about snapshots of a vengeful God in the First Testament; violence and war in Hebrew history; injustice to women and the acceptance of slavery in those earlier Bible books. The Hebrews writer says, "Here is God's final Word. Do you want to see the Father's

face? Look at Jesus. Do you want to know the Father's heart? Get to know Jesus." Most people don't really reject Jesus Christ; they usually reject a distorted caricature of Christ.

I will occasionally hear a remark like this: there are some things about Jesus' teachings which are included in all world religions (the Golden Rule, etc.). But I like the answer one pastor gave to this. True, but in Jesus, for the first time, we see truth embodied, not merely taught. There was no distance between what he said and what he was. All other religions point to something; Jesus announced, "I am the way..." [Dr. Gardner C. Taylor, in a sermon preached at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989].

God, who has spoken through the centuries in many ways, has in these last days spoken through His Son. John's Gospel calls him the Word. God's Last Word did not become an idea, a philosophy, a theory to be discussed, debated or pondered, but the Truth became a Person to be experienced, known, enjoyed, loved...and followed!