

God's Final Word is Jesus!

Hebrews 1:1–9 (NIV84) ¹ In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² 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. 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. ⁵ For to which of the angels 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"? ⁶ And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." ⁷ In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire." ⁸ But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. ⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."

In Christ Jesus the Word of God made flesh, dear fellow redeemed,

A blessed Christmas to you! Merry Christmas! How many times will you speak and hear those words today? Christmas is, in fact, a day on which so many words will be spoken – by phone and in person as family and friends connect with each other. Today we will speak words expressing affection and gratitude. There will be words spoken as presents are given and received – words expressing joy and excitement. There will be words spoken at the dinner table – perhaps a toast to the founder of the feast and compliments paid to the chef.

If only all the words spoken this day were to be so positive and friendly. But that's a real challenge when you bring family together, isn't it? Because as sure as I'm standing here, someone at your dinner table will start sharing an opinion they have, one quite different from an opinion you hold on the given subject. It may be about your favorite sports team, or a topic like global warming, or maybe even that "impeachment thing" that's been in the news. As soon as the conversation starts you know very well you should bite your tongue, but you don't because your opinion is as valid as the next person's – maybe even a little more valid. Before long, what started off as pleasant dinner talk, becomes a verbal ping pong match with each party determined to get the last word. C'mon, really? On Christmas?

Yes, on Christmas. That's not all that surprising is it? Our sinful nature gets the better of us every day of the year, even when we're trying to be on our best behavior. It's this sad truth that makes this day so important to

us and our future. Because Christmas is all about our God getting the last word about us and our sin.

That's a little scary, isn't it? What has God said about sin and sinners? The inspired writer of our text says, "Look in the Bible!" **"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways..."** (Hebrews 1:1). In different ways at different times, whether through dreams or visions, God told the prophets what to say about us sinners and our sin. God told Moses to write: **"...I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me..."** (Exodus 20:5). Likewise he told Ezekiel to write: **"The soul who sins is the one who will die."** (Ezekiel 18:4). The Prophet Isaiah wrote: **"There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."** (Isaiah 57:21).

Of course, it wasn't all gloom and doom. God also told Isaiah, **"Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her...that her sin has been paid for..."** (Isaiah 40:2). So which is it? Punishment and death, or life and salvation? Christians, it's not one or the other; it's both. How? Why? The answer is found in the One whose birth we celebrate this day. The writer to the Hebrews says: **"...in these last days [God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."** (Hebrews 1:2). God's final Word is Jesus! And he's the Word we can count on!

As we gather at Bethlehem's manger this day, we're reminded that the little One who looks so helpless is nothing of the sort. In fact, he's the very instrument of our creation, the One through whom and for whom all things were made. Now, I don't pretend to comprehend all that this means. I can't. But this much I understand, God's eternal Son, born of Mary is all-powerful. In the beginning he served as God's agent, the powerful force of creation and not only that, **"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."** (Hebrews 1:3).

As we peer into the crib of Christ, realize that we are gazing at our God. Jesus is beaming with the radiance of God's glory. Can you see it? Perhaps not, but you experience with every beat of your heart and with every breath that you take. You see its reflection in every sunrise and sunset. For here we learn that God has not placed his creation on cruise control. The planet is not on autopilot. We and all creation are sustained by the powerful word of Jesus. As the Scriptures point out, we don't **"...live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."** (Deuteronomy 8:3). Unless Jesus says, "Breathe!" our lungs are useless!

Why does God want us to know this? He is showing us how important the Son is to our well-being. We don't exist without him. We must and we can depend on him – not just for our earthly life, but for our eternal life. Listen: **"After [Jesus] had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."** (Hebrews 1:3).

You've maybe heard it said that in the end, a person's entire life is represented by the dash between the dates on a gravestone. I suppose in a way, these words about Jesus are like that dash. One short sentence speaks to the purpose of Jesus' entire life on earth – his birth, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension. God became man in the person of Jesus so that he could provide purification for our sins. God put on flesh and blood to earn heaven for us sinners by living the life we can't live – a perfectly holy life worthy of heaven. Without fail, Jesus **"...loved righteousness and hated wickedness;"** (Hebrews 1:9). And the reason this matters to us? Jesus has donated that holiness of his to us. It's ours to claim by faith. As for the matter of our sin – our flesh and blood Savior offered up his holy life as the wages of our sin. He claimed from us the wickedness he hates. He said to his Father, "I'm the soul that sinned. I'm the one that will die." For this reason he became one of us – fully human – so that he could die for us in our place. Don't you see – Jesus didn't come here for Christmas; he came for Good Friday and Easter Sunday. He came to suffer our punishment and death and then rise to give us life and salvation.

Christian songwriter and singer Michael Card captured this very thought in his song, *The Final Word*.

*You and me we use so very many clumsy words.
The noise of what we often say is not worth being heard.
When the Father's wisdom wanted to communicate His love,
He spoke it in one final perfect Word.*

*He spoke the incarnation, and then so was born his Son.
His final word was Jesus, He needed no other one.
Spoke flesh and blood so He could bleed and make a way Divine.
And so was born the baby who would die to make it mine.*

God has gotten the last word. It's not an angry word. It's not the curse we have earned and deserve. It's not even a reluctant word spoken with a measure of regret. Not at all. God's final word to us sinners is Jesus. It's a word that thrills our God. It's amazing, isn't it? You might expect that if God was of a mind to rescue a world of no good sinners that he'd maybe send one of his angels to do it. After all, they're pretty important. It says so right here: **"He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire."** (Hebrews 1:7). But that's not what God thought to do. No, in order to have you back in his family, he was ready and willing to pay the ultimate price – the life-blood of his own eternal Son, the One to whom belongs the throne of heaven itself. So pleased was God to do this that he sent a choir of angels to celebrate Jesus' birth and so worship him who is **"...as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs."** (Hebrews 1:4). Jesus' name says it all. His name means, "The LORD Saves." Jesus loves his name, because he loves you. With every

mention of his name he celebrates your place in his family. And what is your place? God describes your relationship to Jesus in the last verse of our text where he says to his Son: **“God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.”** (Hebrews 1:9).

Picture the scene. It's Ascension Day. After 33 years Jesus returns to heaven. A huge banner reads, “Mission Accomplished.” It's time for a celebration – a victory party. Jesus is given the seat of honor and anointed by his Father with the oil of joy. The invited guests are Jesus' companions, not to the angels of heaven, but those he has been pleased to save. You are those companions. This is the truth that makes Christmas so blessed and so merry.

Think about that as you greet family and friends this day. See yourself as Jesus sees you – his companion, his friend, his blood-bought sister or brother. Let the truth of who you are and what Jesus has made you to be, fill your heart with gratitude and joy. Let your Christmas celebration be a reflection of that victory party that awaits us in heaven. And no matter what else is said today – no matter what opinions are offered or how much they differ from your own, don't worry about getting the last word. For nothing you can say on any subject matters more than what God says to you. Your sin is forgiven. Your place is in heaven and until you get there, you are safe in the Savior's love. Believe it my friends. You have God's Word on it – his final word—Jesus. Amen.