

To know Jesus is to know God

We must not forget the implicit warnings in Jesus' parable of the Sower, particularly the "seed sown among thorns." These are people who receive Jesus, walk with Him for a while, but "the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful." (Mk 4:19) In other words, they follow Jesus for a time, but then get distracted by things such as family problems, anxiety over paying bills, or they just become bored. They begin living for more "interesting" things such as recreation, hobbies, and pleasures. In the end, they fall away.

This is our danger. Jesus wants us to be secure in His salvation. He Himself said, "I give my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." (Jn 10:27) Yet our Lord also said, "He who stands firm to the end will be saved." (Mt 10:22) He makes our salvation secure, but it is not automatic. We must continue to follow.

For this very reason that the New Testament letter to the HEBREWS was written. The recipients were disciples of Jesus under pressure of persecution to revert to their previous Jewish traditions, denying the uniqueness and supremacy of Jesus Christ. In our day, disciples of Jesus are under pressure to deny our faith (or at least keep quiet about it) over such issues as abortion, homosexuality, sexual permissiveness in general, and other lifestyle issues such as absorption in media, financial self-control, and evangelism.

As a pastor though, my greater concern for Jesus' people is the distractedness of life and the possibility of turning away from the Lord to things that seem more compelling. I have been a pastor for quite a while and have practiced personal attention to Jesus for years, yet I know only too well how the worries of this life and deceitfulness of wealth and the desire for other things can capture our hearts one little piece at a time. We must not let this happen. As the writer of Hebrews says, "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to the things we have heard lest we drift away from it." (Heb 2:1)



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So what are those "things we have heard" about Jesus? The first three verses in Hebrews give us the picture. "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the universe." (Heb 1:1-2)

God's fullest communication to His people is now through His Son. Like a king having previously sent his proclamations by heralds, but now having chosen to make his appeals directly through his son, so Jesus is the personal blood representative of the God of heaven and earth. To disregard the Son is to disregard God. "Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him." (Jn 5:23)

Notice also that the Son is described as the HEIR of all things. In other words, everything in the cosmos will one day be gathered up and presented in honor to Jesus as His inheritance. Everything about your life and mine has to do with this honoring of Jesus. One day heaven and earth will be found fully submitted to His glory. We, who know this now, have the privilege of beginning now. Even though we don't see it now, it is nonetheless true that "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ." (Rev 11:15)

What is more, everything in the universe was all made originally through the Son. How can this be, when Jesus was born 2000 years ago? Because as God the Son, Jesus has always existed as a distinct part of God Himself. The recent novel THE SHACK does an excellent job in my opinion of helping

the reader to understand the distinctions in the triune personality of God.

The writer of Hebrews continues: "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Heb 1:3)

Jesus is the exact replica of God. If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. Jesus Himself said, "When you have seen me, you have seen the Father." (Jn 14:9) The culmination of His life and ministry was to "purge our sins." The Hebrew tradition was for perfect, unblemished, valuable sacrificial animals to make periodic atonement for sin by the shedding of blood. Jesus made complete atonement, forevermore, by the shedding of His blood on the cross. There is no sin than was not atoned for on His cross. We have the privilege therefore of keeping short accounts with God over our sins, because Jesus has already made a divine satisfaction for the penalty due for our wrong doing.

And having "sat down" at the right hand of God, Jesus now reigns over God's kingdom. The kingdom of God is Jesus ruling over all things in love. We enter this kingdom, trusting Jesus, and find that in love we are accepted, in love we are protected and provided for, and in love we are governed and guided. This being the case, we begin to turn loose of fear. And anger. And contempt and lust. Because God is sufficient, we let go of haste, of seeking applause, of anxious striving to secure oneself, of anxious striving to "straighten out" other people, and of anxious striving for God's approval. We let go of having to have our way.

Instead, increasingly permeated with divine love, we trust God in all things and learn to love even our enemies. We enter divine rest and stay there.

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