

THE EXACT IMPRINT

Hebrews 1: 1-14 ~ Rev. Ed Hoekstra

Clearer and more direct communication: There is a story about two church members who are working on a road construction job site. The boss tells them to put up a sign for motorists. The boss did not tell them what to put on the sign, so they put this: "The end is near! Turn around before it is too late!" It wasn't too long before a car drove up. The driver saw the sign, rolled down his window and yelled out: "I just wish you religious nuts would leave us alone!" The motorist immediately sped up, turned around the corner and out of sight. Shortly after, one could hear the screech of tires and a big splash. The one church member turned to the other and said, "You know, I told you that we should have just put up a sign that said, "Bridge out".

It is important how we phrase our communication. It is important that it is clear and exact. Otherwise, people will miss out on important news that could make a positive difference in their life.

God spoke first through the prophets and then through the Son (Hebrews 1: 1,2). When God spoke through the prophets, the message was periodic and partial in nature. This message was given over 10 centuries and given by a variety of means. Now the message is not spoken through the prophets but through the Son. The prophets were merely instruments in the hand of God, while Jesus is the visible presence of the invisible God. Before the message was partial, now it is complete. Formally it was a message of preparation, now the message through Christ is fulfilled. This New Testament of Jesus Christ is clearer and more direct.

Jesus created and sustains the world (Verse 2, 3). It says in our scriptures, "he made the worlds". The word translated is not the well-known Greek word "Kosmos" but rather "aionos" which means 'the ages'. In other words, Jesus was not only there in the making of the universe, but he brought space, time and matter into being. He is also the sustainer of the universe. He created all things by his word, but he also upholds all things by that same powerful word. If you consider what damage would occur if the earth's rotation slowed down just a little. Furthermore, the sun's surface temperature is around 12,000 degrees F. If we were closer to it, we would be burned up, further away, we would freeze. The tilt of the axis, the distance of the moon, the density of the atmosphere, are all finely calibrated to keep us alive and keep things moving. How does the universe stay in this amazing delicate balance? The scripture say that God through Christ made the worlds and sustains them. He was there from the beginning (John 1). He is God. The nature of God is imprinted in Jesus.

The exact imprint of God is found in Jesus. It is important to remember that the author of Hebrews was talking to a group of Christians who were intensely persecuted, and were new in the faith. The

message to these new Christians is to stand firm on the liberating good news revealed in Jesus Christ. He urged them not to go back to their old religion.

Finger prints reveal our identity in a very precise manner. When one's finger prints are recorded, the identity of the individual is captured. The book of Hebrews claims that the total nature of God is found in Jesus. As Christians, it is important that we ask this question regularly in our lives: "what would Jesus do? Or, how would Jesus respond to this situation?" We can be certain that a response to a threat in our lives or a threat in the greater world is best to be made in line with how Jesus (God) would handle the situation. When the disciple Philip asked Jesus to show him the Father, Jesus replied, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

Jesus made the sacrifice for sin. The author of Hebrews wants to make it clear to the Christians that Jesus is superior to the prophets, the angels, or anyone who has walked the face of the earth. The sin offerings--the blood of the bulls and goats could never take away sin, it was only a temporary measure--an incomplete stop gap. These priests could never rest from their work, because the stop-gap had to be performed repeatedly by the priests. It states in verse 4, "*He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on High (God the father)*". Jesus was done, he did not need to do it again, it was complete! Jesus Christ made the sacrifice for sin once and for all! Only God could do that.

Jesus is a big deal for our everyday life! Jesus made it clear. Jesus made it complete. Jesus is the exact imprint of God. This identity was revealed not merely for historical or academic reasons, but for the purpose of redeeming each one of God's children and reconciling the world to wholeness and peace. Jesus is a big deal! What do we do with this?

Back in 1992, George Barna conducted a survey of church people asking them if their Christian faith affected the way they lived. The answer: 55% said their faith affected the way they lived from day to day. Why so few? Why would that be? Maybe it is because Jesus was not a big deal compared to everything else in their lives.

One reason for this, a theologian suggested, is that often Christians will say they believe in God, but they hardly mention Jesus. The scholar said that the difference is that talking about Jesus is specific. The talk about God is more a general concept. Jesus is clearer and more specific about how we are to love one another and how to live. The specifics of God's sacrificial love for His children, imprinted in the Son, Jesus Christ connects God personally to our life story. In addition, God the Holy Spirit is the presence of Jesus now, guiding and counselling His children each day.

Jesus became a big deal because you are a big deal to him. Following Him is more important than anything else. Amen.