

The Last Word of Christmas

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- [0 : 0 0] Hebrews chapter 1, verses 1 through 3. 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 world.
- He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature. And he upholds the universe by the word of his power.
- After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. That is the glorious word of the Lord.
- Please be seated. Thank you, Praise Team. Thank you so much, guys, for this beautiful Advent music.
- [1 : 0 0] Thank you. We like using phrases, something like, that's my final word. Right?
- That's my final word. Or things like, she got the last word, you know. Either way, the idea behind those phrases is that no more words need to be said.
- Conversation over. Now it's time to get to work. Is that how you see Christmas? Is that how you see Christmas?
- God said it, that settles it. Let's get to work. Because that is one of the messages of Christmas.
- If you remember last Sunday, and I won't go through all the details, but we know Hebrews is a book written to Christian Jews.
- [2 : 0 5] And they're being pressured, you know, to turn back to Judaism. And the writer of Hebrews is showing them that Jesus is superior to all of the Old Testament. But he begins this beautiful letter by explaining how God speaks to his people.
- And so, I got a few points. Just a few. First thing is, first, we are shown God's word before Christmas. Long ago, at many times, and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.
- This is the word before Christmas. Before the coming of Jesus. God spoke through prophets, he says. And in various ways.
- Joseph, remember, got dreams. Daniel, remember, got visions. The prophets spoke the will of God under the old covenant.
- They spoke for God. Their word was the word of God. To disregard their word was to disregard God.
- [3 : 2 4] They corrected the people. When the people got off track, the prophet was sent by God to bring them back on track. He wasn't just someone preaching the future. He was someone preaching the word to the people.
- For how they are to live right then and there. There was even a type of formula that they would use to let people know that, I'm sorry, that I, Elijah, am not just speaking my own thoughts.

They had a formula. Everybody, all the prophets tend to use it. It begins really in Exodus chapter 4. When God sends Moses back to Pharaoh, he tells Moses to say, Thus says the Lord.

That's the formula. All throughout the Old Testament. Joshua used it in Joshua 24 too. Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel.

All of them used it. Elijah, 2 Kings. Isaiah used it. Oh, I love Isaiah's. But 43.1. But now thus says the Lord, He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel, Fear not, For I have redeemed you.

[4 : 50] I have called you by name. You are mine. Man, that's a thus say of the Lord you want to hear. Let that thus say of the Lord seek into your spirit. That's beautiful. Jeremiah used Ezekiel.

All of them used this phrase to indicate that their words carried weight. Not because they were smart. Not because they were wise.

Not because they were philosophical. None of that mattered. Their words carried weight because it was the word of God. And here's the thing. God held them accountable.

He made it clear that if a prophet did not speak his word, who claimed to be speaking his word, but was not speaking his word, he was going to be put to death. So the prophet could not get the word of God wrong.

There was no grace. Because the word of God, the word of when it is spoken, and he is speaking, it must be obeyed.

[6 : 00] So you could not fudge that or fumble that. At one point, God even spoke through a donkey. In Numbers chapter 22, God spoke in these various ways, but he made it clear. It is he who is doing the speaking. But the writer of Hebrews says, something better has come.

Now what could be better? I mean, come on. What could be better than the prophet speaking the word of God to the people?

What could be better than that? Jesus is God's final word at Christmas. Listen to verse two.

But in these last days. Okay, you follow me? God spoke, right? Long ago, many times, many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

[7 : 10] But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son, whom he appointed the heir of all things to whom also he created the world, the world.

These words imply an end to the old and now a final revelation. A final word.

Miss this and you miss everything. Nothing else needs to be said. The error of the old covenant prophet has come to an end with the ultimate prophet, God's son, who is more than a prophet.

and to ignore or disobey his word was to commit cosmic suicide.

Jesus is the final prophet born at Christmas because he not only speaks the words of God, he is the creating word of God in human flesh.

[8 : 25] I love how the scriptures hang together. Remember I told you this story you might not remember. I told you this story some years ago. I was witnessing to a Jehovah Witness. I'm sitting there eating breakfast.

Anybody remember this story? No? No? Okay. I don't want to be redundant. You know, I'm being boring you to death. I was eating. Rachel, I'm trying to eat breakfast in this restaurant. Cafe 57. Remember, forget it, in D.C.

D.C. area. I'm eating breakfast. I got my grits. I got my eggs. I'm having a good time here. And this guy comes over and wants to talk to me about the 144,000. And I'm sitting there going, okay, talk to me.

Sit down. He sits down. I said, I said, listen, I don't want to talk about all that. I said, tell me what you believe about Jesus. See, see, y'all get all tricked up because y'all want to argue with them.

No, no, no, no, no, no, no. Cut to the chase, people, with everybody. What do you know? What do you believe about Jesus? That is really the issue. That's the big issue, right? So he begins to talk to me and tell me what he believed and I just sat there and listened.

[9 : 29] Family, just listen to people, will you? Don't be so quick to try to get your point across. Just listen. Let people talk. They're trying to tell you something. They're trying to reveal something to you about themselves.

That's a good thing. Listen. Well, God gave me grace because I didn't know any better either, but I just sat there with my fork. And he talked and he talked for about a good 30 minutes.

I just said, uh-huh. I said, mm-hmm. I was just asked clarifying questions. Here's a beautiful thing. Something beautiful happened afterwards. He said to me, man, because he was used to being beat up on.

He said, you know, you've been so kind to listen to me. I would love to hear what you have to say. He said, can we get back together next week? Because it was like, you know, it was time to go here.

I said, I said, sure. So I came back next week. He came. He showed up. And so I began to take him on a journey. I'll call it Jesus on the ones.

[10 : 36] We went to, here's the one, John chapter one. In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made. And the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory.

Glory as of the only son from the father full of grace and truth. Jesus is the creating word of God in human flesh.

Now of course he talked about how he tried to toss that a God thing in there. You know, Jesus is, you've heard this discussion before, right? You've heard this with their new world translation of the Bible which is what they use which I do not, it's probably the only Bible I don't recommend.

It's not very good. It's not the best translation. It really isn't because they put their theology into the translation and so it says in the beginning was the word and the word was a God.

[11 : 39] And so I said, you know, that's really not good translation. And I just shared some things with him, a little bit I know about Greek and we went on.

I said, but then I took him to Hebrews chapter 1. We get to Colossians 1 in a minute. I went to Colossians 1 then I went to Hebrews chapter 1. When we got to this passage, this is what caught him up, sure.

this passage, this so exalts the Son of God, which backs up chapter 1 of John, that the universe exists because the word Jesus willed it and made it.

This is why he's the final word, y'all. When the creator comes and speaks, he didn't send a messenger this time.

He didn't send merely a human prophet this time. No, this time God himself takes up the mantle of the prophet, as it were, the final prophet, the ultimate prophet, the son of man, the son of God, God in human flesh comes and speaks.

[13 : 06] When God speaks, there's nothing else to be said. When God comes in person to settle a matter.

But there's some tricky stuff here. this is what my Jehovah Witness friends get a little tricked up sometimes by. Because in this passage in Hebrews 1-2, Jesus, the son of man, is called the heir of all things.

Now, what does that mean? Some think that means, and they do think that it means that God created Jesus. He's like a lower being, somehow, of God, and so he is not the almighty God, but he's a mighty God, but he's not quite God the way God is God.

Now, listen, when he says he's the heir of all things, what he's saying is that all things belong to him. Since the word, Jesus, created all things, all things belong to him.

now we go to Colossians 1. I'm going to pull that up because I didn't write it all in my notes. But now we go to Colossians 1, and this will make some sense to you here.

[14 : 27] Verse 15, speaking of Jesus, he's the image of the visible God. We'll come back to that. He's the firstborn of all creation. That's like saying air. For by him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.

All things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things. And in him all things hold together.

We can come back to that too. Because they're saying the same thing. It's the testimony of scripture. Who is this baby? The firstborn heir of all creation by, he's saying yes.

Remember in the biblical times, the firstborn is the one who gets the lion share. If you were second or third born, well, you got something.

But you didn't get the real deal. You didn't get all the glory. You didn't, the family name doesn't so much carry through you. You, the first born, he is the heir.

[15 : 43] Everything really belongs to him. And God is saying to us that all that has been made belongs to Jesus.

And Colossians makes it clear so beautifully that he is before all things. And all things were made through him and for him.

I looked at my friend and said, listen, man, you look at all these passages and you're telling me that Jesus is the archangel Michael? You're telling me that he's a created being when all things were not only made by him, through him, but for him?

That you exist for him? the universe, the suns, all the solar systems, every plant, every tree, every atom exists for Jesus.

And you're trying to say he's a created being. Let's think about that for a minute. I never saw him again. He is the perfect word from God.

[17 : 01] The final word that fulfills the word of God of the old covenant. The gospel and all the New Testament is the outworking of God's final word in his son.

This means that anything that comes after Jesus claiming to be the word from God is false.

anything that comes after Jesus claiming to continue the work of God is false.

It's false. I hope you're not waffling on that. I know we got dear neighbors and friends who believe maybe the Book of Mormon or the Quran or different things and they're our friends and they're neighbors and we respect them and honor them but don't get it twisted family.

If Jesus is who he said he was, the son of God, the son of man, he's the final word. God said all he needed to say.

- [18 : 19] And the New Testament is the outworking of that final word. An explanation of that final word. Anything beyond that will lead you into some really messy territory.
- Some play with your mind. Let the word of God, the final revelation of God in Christ. Be where your heart is and what you meditate on and what you study.
- I'm not saying there is no of a scientific. We're not talking about scientific. We're talking about God's revelation of who he is and what he wants of us.
- Now, we're discovering new scientific things all the time, but we're not discovering a new word of God. God. And yet, I find that many Christians are looking for God to speak to them through tongues, dreams, prophecies, and signs.
- And yet, God says here in his word that he did that already. And in his last days, we are in the last, last days, he has spoken to us through a better word.
- [19 : 44] Hebrew says a better covenant in Jesus. Anything, any way God may, now God can nudge you.
- He'll nudge you in different ways. I'm not saying that, brother. But when he nudges you, you will find yourself back to the word of the Lord. He will never nudge you away from it.
- And you know, I guess we all do it to some extent, right? God told me. Now listen, as long as God told you we jive with this, I'm good.
- You're good. You're on safe ground. But when God tells you something that does not jive with the revelation in the Son, that's not God speaking to you.
- I love what happened when Jesus was transfigured. You know, that word, it's an interesting word, transfigured. It means metamorphosis. Remember in Matthew chapter 17, I'm going to read it, verses 1 through 5.
- [21 : 07] After six days, Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John, his brother, led them up onto the high mountain by themselves, just the four of them by themselves. And he was transfigured.
- He was metamorphosized before them. His face shone like the sun. His clothes became white as light. Behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking with him.
- And Peter said to Jesus, Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah. He was still speaking when behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them and cut him off.
- And a voice from the cloud said, this is my beloved son with whom I am well, please listen to him. Peter is saying, no, we're going to put Jesus, Moses and Elijah and Jesus.
- that was his version of the Trinity. And he's going to put them up together and God the father says to them, now keep in mind, Moses, the law, Elijah, the prophets.
- [22 : 19] That's basically the whole old covenant now. And Peter is saying, let me go and put Jesus. And God says, shut up. Shut up. Shut up. Listen, this is my son.
- My final word on the subject. My last word on the subject. The one who fulfills Moses and Elijah.
- Listen to him. Boom. It was gone. Cloud was gone. End of story. God has spoken. That's exactly what we have to understand.
- that's it. Christmas is God's last word.
- Before Jesus comes again. Jesus is transfigured. I love that idea. He's like the caterpillar going into the cocoon around him.

[23 : 29] You know, and all of a sudden, he boom, the butterfly comes out. For just a few moments, Jesus let his disciples see his butterfly. For just a few moments, he pulled back the cocoon, as it were, and broke through, and let them see some of the true glory that he has.

God's last love. And whenever we pick up this word of the Lord and stare into it, seeing Jesus, we are seeing that glory.

We are seeing that majesty as we open the new covenant, that which he revealed to us. So who commands your attention?

to whom are you turning for wisdom and guidance? Christmas screams at us a powerful message that God sent his son to give us his final message, the gospel.

So turn to him and it for wisdom and decision-making and knowledge of God. too many Christians, I have to tell you, I've done this, I've got to confirm.

[24 : 48] We're like children who go to one parent asking for permission to go hiking with their friends. And the first parent says no. So then we go to another parent, the other parent, hoping for a better word.

Or, if not a parent, we may go to our friends hoping for better wisdom to see what they think, right? do you turn to the word of Christ and his gospel for your final word?

Or are you then turning to the experts in Babylon to see if they will agree with what thy will be done is? God is interested in being your co-pilot.

He's the pilot. his kingdom is the plane. You're just a passenger. You may be serving snacks on the flight, but you're still just a passenger.

It's, God, what is your word? What do you have to say to me? Your will be done. I had a musician years ago.

[26 : 08] We were church planting. And she would come up to me almost every other Sunday she'd come up to me. She was, dear sister, my Pentecostal sister. She was my organist, man.

Man, when that woman got going, God would use her to pick up our service, carry us to Jesus. It was amazing. She would start playing and she'd start singing and we'd just with her. she would say, preacher, preacher, is there a word?

And I would look at her and I would hold up my Bible. I got 66 books of word. Which one do you want? I'm not trying to give you something that ain't here.

I've got nothing to tell you that's not here. I'm not trying to make up something and give you something fresh. That's not my job. It's to point you to the final word.

So you see him in all his glory and majesty and you fall in love with him and you want to give yourself to him and you say for him I live and for him I die. That's my desire.

[27 : 12] That's my goal. It's for you to just love Jesus and just lay at his feet. Because he's glorious. Because he's not only this creating final word, he's also the sustaining word.

Jesus is God's final word at Christmas who holds the universe together. Now I'm in with this because this is beautiful because you know it just tells me he made us for himself, right?

but he didn't walk away. You know the watchmaker theology of God where God creates the world and then he disappears behind the curtain and says y'all work it out now.

No, no, no, that's not the Bible. That's deism. Some of the founding fathers believed that by the way, like Jefferson, but no, no, no, no.

God creates the world and then he sustains the world. He's imminent, he's close, he's if Jesus would stop breathing somehow, the universe would collapse.

[28 : 34] Just get that in your head. If Jesus would just blink, would lose concentration, the universe would fall apart.

He's the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

power. You know, the old myths, you have Atlas, right, and Atlas who held the sky up on his shoulders, you know the story, right, the Greek mythology, Atlas holding up the sky.

No. Jesus is holding up Atlas. He's holding up everything. He's holding everything rests on his shoulders, on his word.

The word that he spoke in Genesis, let there be light, is still reverberating throughout all of history. That word is still speaking.

[29 : 46] It's still holding up. It's like it just never, it's like it spoke as a wave just flows through and keeps flowing through all of time, holding up everything that's been created.

What a picture. And John says, and the writer of Hebrews says, he's the radiance of God's glory. This sustaining word, he can do that because he's the radiance of God's glory.

He's the, as it were, the great light of God's glory. Oh my gosh. In Isaiah 6, when the angels covered their face, as it were, they were, it was like, it was the glory of Christ that was blinding them.

When Peter, when Paul talks about in 1st Timothy 6, 16, that God dwells in an unapproachable light, that unapproachable light, as it were, is the glory of the sun.

He's the shining brilliance of God's glory made visible to us. Is it any wonder that in Revelation chapter 1, when the apostle John, who knew Jesus intimately, who laid on his shoulders at the last supper, this apostle who was so close to the son of God, and yet in chapter 1 of Revelation, when Jesus, the risen and ascended Christ, comes to give him the outcome of history.

[31 : 22] John sees his glory, and he falls at his feet, he says, as though he were dead. You can't sit in the glory of Christ and stand there gawking in all of your pride and human majesty.

You can't. When you see Jesus, brothers and sisters, his majesty humbles you. The reason we got so much pride in us is because we haven't seen enough of the glory.

If you're somebody who can't listen, you always have to be right, your way or the highway. You haven't seen the glory. You haven't been humbled.

When you see the glory of Christ, you're going to shut your mouth. You're going to listen to people because you realize I don't have it all together.

Forgive me for thinking I do, but I don't. The glory humbles us. He's the exact imprint of God's nature, he says.

[32 : 39] Exact imprint. It's like, you remember the old type, oh gosh, the old typewriters. The old typewriter kid says something called keys.

And you would push, and it would, so you push the A, and then the A, the little arm, had an A on it, and it would strike the paper and the ink at the same time.

You push the key, A, boom, A would strike the paper. And when it struck the paper, it left the imprint of A. Very primitive, I know.

Jesus is that imprint, as it were. He's even better than that, but I'm just trying to give you an analogy. The word for, as he says, he's the character, imprint, he's the character of God's nature.

He's the very character of God. If you want to know what God is like personally, look at Jesus. Want to see God's love?

[33 : 39] Look at Jesus. Want to see God's righteousness? Want to see God's anger? God's wrath? Look at Jesus. You want to see God's compassion? Look at Jesus. Any, whatever God is like, Jesus is.

He's the image of the invisible God, Colossians 1, we read earlier. God's God's God's God's God's God's God's God's word of his power.

Here's the thing. When you look in the manger at Christmas, you see this baby there, right? I hope you do to your baby.

It's wrapped in, you know, diapers and whatnot, whatever they have, swaddling cloths, they call it. But in that manger is the radiance of the glory of God.

In that manger is the exact imprint of God's nature. In that manger is the one who upholds the universe by the word of his power.

[34 : 54] God's love. I watch all these shows, Hallmark, Great American Family Channel now. They broke away from Hallmark to make their own thing. I love that show. You see all these wonderful Christmas movies and shows.

They're sweet. I've raised four daughters, got five women. I have to watch this stuff. The funny thing is I'm beginning to enjoy it, so pray for me.

You watch this stuff, and it's all really sweet and good things happening. Oh, I didn't see that coming. But I don't see the awe.

I don't see the true awe. I'm not saying there's some good, they're not good things out there. Amen, they're good things. But do you see the awe? Does your chin drop?

Do you, do you, do you expect, does your brain go tilt? Do you, do you go like, I, do you get speechless when you comprehend who Jesus is, when you contemplate who Jesus is?

[36 : 09] So Christmas and every day, why don't you do that? Let's say we start doing this more often. Think about who the baby is. You know who the man is.

But blow your, let the baby blow your mind too. Same person. But it's so striking. And think about what the writer is saying here.

At times we may debate the meaning of what the Bible says, right? The final revelation, God's final revelation in Jesus, the new covenant, all of it's God's word. word. We may debate the meaning of what the Bible says, but we should never debate that we owe obedience to what the Bible says.

I'm seeing that happening more and more in Christians' lives where we're debating whether we should obey God's word because it doesn't fit with the cultural norms.

That's death, saints. if God has spoken and his last word has been given in Jesus, to neglect that is to court death.

[37 : 19] I'm just going to tell you straight up. So if you're listening and you're, I just want to be honest with you, I can't let you leave here without knowing that. To neglect him is to court death.

He is, in him is life. He said, I came that you may have life and have it to the full. To know him is to have eternal life, abundant life, real life, true life, and to close my eyes as my friend Phil did and I will one day too, to close my eyes in faith knowing I am safe and secure, no worries.

In him is life. We do owe obedience to the Bible and we don't get to rewrite it because the culture doesn't like what it says. You can't rewrite the word of God.

Take confidence in knowing that if Jesus sustains all of creation, that means he's sustaining you. He's sustaining you in faith. He's sustaining you in life.

Take courage. I don't care what's happening. I don't care what's happening around you. Take courage. He who upholds the universe is upholding you.

[38 : 36] you. You're his. He will sustain your very life. Even though you fall, you will not utterly fall. And your life is, you are immortal until Jesus says you can leave.

Nothing can take you out until Jesus, the sustaining one, says it's time for you to go. If he's the heir of all things, then know that you have also obtained an eternal inheritance in him.

He is your inheritance. He is your life. He is everything that you could ever hope for and dream of is in Jesus. And as Peter says, you should greatly rejoice.

Even though now for a little while you may have to suffer grief in all kinds of trials, rejoice, you have an inheritance. It's kept for you.

So praise Jesus, the Son of God, God's final word for us at Christmas. And that final word will come again.

[39 : 46] And that will be the final, final word. Merry Christmas to you. I pray you had a blessed Christmas. And this is the 12 days of Christmas. Don't forget, 12 days of Christmas. The song's all about, right?

So don't stop celebrating now. All because the radio turned off the music. Put it on in your put it on. And we still celebrate. Amen? Let's pray.

Father, thank you. Thank you that Jesus is the sustaining power of the universe, the creating power of the universe.

He did it all. He did it all for himself. We belong to him. We exist for him. And Lord, help us to love him who has loved us by coming and dying for us.

Oh, his heart is... Father, we could never believe it unless you opened our hearts to do it. That the son of God would become human and die for messed up folk like us.

[40 : 49] But it's true. And you've called us to see it. Help us, Lord, to walk in this truth, to walk with our head up, our heads held high, trusting in Jesus, not in our own wisdom or flesh or power, but humbly trusting in Jesus, knowing that we are safe and secure in him.

Come with May in this next year. Come with May in our country. Help us to rejoice that we are secure and safe in Jesus.

And help us to tell as many people as we can about they can find safety and hope and life. In his name we pray. Thank you.