

“To whom do you mostly listen?”

Hebrews 1:1-4, World English Bible

“God, having in the past spoken to the fathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 has at the end of these days spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds.

“3 His Son is the radiance of his glory, the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, who, when he had by himself purified us of our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much better than the angels as the more excellent name he has inherited is better than theirs.”

Hebrews 2:5-9 WEB

“For he didn’t subject the world to come, of which we speak, to angels.6 But one has somewhere testified, saying,

‘What is man, that you think of him?

Or the son of man, that you care for him?

7 You made him a little lower than the angels. You crowned him with glory and honor. 8 You have put all things in subjection under his feet.’

“For in that he subjected all things to him, he left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we don’t see all things subjected to him, yet. 9 But we see him who has been made a little lower than the angels, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste of death for everyone.”

Today’s text is about listening.

To whom do you listen most?

Shrill voices shout and scream.

They want our support, our votes, our business, our money, our allegiance.

They claim to be trustworthy.

To which do you heed?

Do you trust their testimonials and promises?

It’s hard to find qualified, dependable folks to service our vehicles.

It’s tough to find trustworthy, competent medical folks.

What about those to whom we go for ultimate life questions?

How reliable are they?

Norma and I spent nearly 3½ decades in California, mostly in the Hollywood area.

People from various parts of the country visited us.

One friend had been seriously communicating with a spiritual-counselor based in Hollywood.

This friend apparently had phone conversations; and had purchased the counselor’s books.

Once on a visit, he asked me to drive him by the offices of this life-expert with a Santa Monica Boulevard address.

To someone not familiar with the area, Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood, likely sounded impressive.

I do not know how that location might look now, but the parking lot then was weedy; the small one story building resembled an office for an old construction site.

“That’s his office?” he said in dismay.

I said nothing; no comment was necessary.

On whom or what are you relying for your ultimate questions?

Our *Hebrews text* tells of methods and authentic credentials.

About forty years ago, at his residence, I spoke with a man who claimed he was god. To use a term popular at the time, this guy had fancy “digs”; no weeds grew in his parking lot.

He convinced many younger people that he was divine.

Norma met three of his followers; I later met and spoke with several of them.

They seemed happy and enjoying life—what appeared to be a carefree existence.

I do not know where any of those folks are now, but I am 100% confident of one truth.

Not one thinks that man is a god today.

Whether they buried the god-claimant in an L.A. cemetery, or whether the sheriff chased him out of the county, he is only a memory.

One evening years earlier, Norma and I talked with a well-dressed fellow who claimed to be Jesus Christ the Second.

He had few followers; but he could not convince a judge that he deserved the name, Jesus.

Whether he gave up his charade and got a real job or went home to live in his parents' basement, we never heard.

Both men probably now push up daisies.

Giving our lives over to humans is like believing that the owner of a muscle car in Sioux City could drive you all the way to Hawaii.

Human claims of divinity are pathetic, trivial clatter, aren't they?

Hebrews tells of the only reliable being.

Our *Hebrews* text presents his methods and credentials.

Can we believe them?

Before we proceed, let's check a few mysteries about the Hebrews writer.

Whoever wrote Hebrews was an exceptional writer.

The author does not identify him/herself.

Some think the Apostle Paul wrote Hebrews.

A few feel the author might have been an extraordinary teacher named Priscilla.

Read the *Bible* in the King James Version, and *Bible* books tend to sound the same: many thee(s) thine(s), cometh(s) and goeth(s), etc.

Those who read the *Bible* in its original languages, find a wide variety of styles.

In the *New Testament*, Greek students usually start reading the writings of John.

No teacher would have beginning Greek students start with the *Book of Hebrews*.

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As the scholar, Gerald F. Hawthorne wrote:
“In language and learning, Hebrews ranks first among NT writings.”¹

Unless you brought your sleeping bags and food for several days, we could not explain all the exciting, fascinating facts one can discover in this Hebrew’s text.

Today, we shall focus on a few.

“God, having in the past spoken to the fathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, has at the end of these days spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds.”

Hebrews tell us that in the past, God spoke to many different individuals in various locations, and circumstances.²

He talked to some in visions and dreams, from a burning bush, and face to face.

He spoke to others on mountain tops, on board ships at sea, to Jonah at the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea, and to guys working in the fields.

He talked with folks in ancient Iraq, in Iran, in Israel, and while they traveled.

He spoke to kings, queens, commoners, men, women, and very young folks.

The English word “polymer,” which describes certain types of complex chemicals, is derived from the first word in Hebrews.³

As you know, “poly” denotes “many” or “numerous.”

Before Christ, God spoke to folks in many places in a variety of conditions and times.

The Hebrews writer not only used technical terms, he used rhythm and alliteration.

Of the 12 Greek words in the first verse, five of them begin with a “p” sound.⁴

¹ *New International Bible Commentary*, F.F. Bruce, General Editor, Hebrews, p-1500, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1979

² There is not a good English equivalent to the Greek words in verse one.

³ πολυμερῶς

⁴ The letter Π in Greek

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If you heard them in Greek, here is how the first four words would sound:

**“Polumerós kai polutrópos pálai
The “p” sounds proliferate, don’t they?”**

That kind of rhythmic alliteration made Henry Wadsworth Longfellow famous. Some called the style, “melodious musicality.”

In these lines from Longfellow’s “Hiawatha’s Childhood,” “g” sounds dominate:

**By the shores of Gitche Gummee,
By the shining Big-Sea-Water,
Stood the wigwam of Nokomis . . .**

If you will pardon this brief bit of levity, Norma and many women recall this short Longfellow poem:

**“There was a little girl”
“There was a little girl, she had a little curl
Right in the middle of her forehead;
And when she was good, she was very,
very good,
And when she was bad, she was horrid.”**

Do you think Longfellow might have written this poem about one of his daughters?

We get to know members of our family really well, don’t we?

That is why someone wrote that an expert is someone a thousand miles from home and his/her family remains silent.

But what about God; can we know Him?

“Yes we can,” says Hebrews and the rest of the New Testament.

Today’s text reads:

God, “has at the end of these days spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds.

“³ His Son is the radiance of his glory, the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, who, when he had by himself purified us of our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much better than the angels as the more excellent name he has inherited is better than theirs.”

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We know God by listening to Jesus, following him, and imitating him, who was God in the flesh.

The more intently we listen to Jesus and act as he did, the better we know God.

When Jesus told people that God was his Father, his contemporaries became furious.⁵

If I said today, “I am the way, the truth and the life, nobody gets to God except through me,” some of you would walk out.

If I claimed I am, all of should skedaddle.

You who did not immediately exit would likely say, **“Bob needs a strait jacket.”**

Neutrality toward someone who makes claims like that is unthinkable.

Jesus’ own brothers in the flesh wanted him committed; Mary probably had her doubts.⁶

Where are you on the question of Jesus? Do you really believe he’s the Son of God?

Recall what the scoffers said when Jesus

was on the cross: “If you are the son of God, come down from there? Wrench those nails from your hands like Superman or Samson and come down,” they said, “and we’ll believe you.”

Had Jesus done that, nothing would have changed.

For three years, Jesus taught good things, performed miracles, raised dead people like Lazarus and the widow’s son.

For the first time in their lives, blind men saw the food they ate, saw rivers and mountains, and saw their loved ones.

Deaf people heard, mute people talked, thousands of hungry people ate lunch, sat satisfied, and wiped their mouths after they ate free meals Jesus created.

Jesus showed people all kinds of evidence.

A few did believe; the skeptics did not; many remained uncommitted.

I think you understand why.

⁵ John 5:16-18

⁶ See John 7:5, Mark 3:20, 21, 30,31

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They refused to listen for this reason:

to accept who Jesus is meant that they would have to change from living as they chose to living as God requires.

Isn't that what keeps us from fully honoring and exalting God in Christ?

**We have habits we don't want to quit;
Hates we refuse to forgive;
Time we don't want to give God.**

What are you doing about your faith in Jesus?

Folks still ridicule those who believe in Jesus the Son of God and his resurrection from the dead

“It's stupid to believe in that stuff” they say.

Science, education, and government are the answer, they assert.

Science, education, and government have their place and I am grateful for them.

But when their advocates say we are foolish

to believe in Jesus, they are wrong.

Here's why:

Who has ever felt loved or achieved moral renewal because of what government, science, or education has done?

I know this; Jesus changed my life⁷ and changed Norma's life, and have we seen him change many others.

Think how wrong scoffers at the cross were as they mocked, **“If you are the Son of God, come down from there.”**

Here is what they didn't understand: Jesus stayed on the cross because he was the Son of God; he stayed there and he died saying, “Father, forgive them, they don't know what they are doing.”

He could have come down.

He stayed because God's love was in him.

Jesus' sacrificial love changes people's hearts.

⁷ I confess that I am a very slow work in progress.

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Government, science, and education cannot.

Science and medicine can help us live longer and improve the quality of life.

Education can help us live more efficiently and confidently.

Sometimes, but not always, governments help us feel secure.

Only God’s loving care can change us.

Are you listening to His son, Jesus?

Someday every scientist, educator, preacher, politician, you, and I will bow before the Son of God.

I pray that all of us are ready for that event and are helping help others prepare.

Robert Blair
PO Box 176
Cleghorn, IA 51014 www.robertblairbooks.com