

**Hebrews 1:1-9**

***In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. <sup>5</sup> 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"? <sup>6</sup> And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." <sup>7</sup> In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire." <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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."***

**We marvel that the creator of the universe would come to earth for us.**

- 1. Jesus became our brother to save us.**
- 2. Let us be forever fascinated by this good news.**

It was unlike anything that anyone had ever seen. Apollo 8 astronauts Frank Borman, Jim Lovell, and Bill Anders scrambled to get color film into their camera and snap a picture of the earth. These men were the first human beings to orbit the moon and see the earth rise over the moon's desolate horizon. The photo they took became one of the most iconic photographs ever taken. This photo, Earthrise, turned 45 years old this Christmas Eve. A recent documentary details how this picture almost never happened and how these three men scrambled to take the picture as their capsule was spinning and their opportunity was limited. However, they were eager to make sure that this moment was preserved and this image was passed down for all to see.

This recent documentary also makes mention of a poet who was so deeply stirred by this iconic photograph that he wrote these poignant and emotional words shortly after the photograph was released. He wrote, "For the first time in all of time, men have seen the Earth. Seen it not as continents or oceans from the little distance of a hundred miles or two or three, but seen it from the depths of space; seen it whole and round and beautiful and small... To see the Earth as it truly is, small and blue and beautiful in that eternal silence where it floats, is to see ourselves as riders on the Earth together, brothers on that bright loveliness in the eternal cold—brothers who know that they are truly brothers."

The view of the earth from space is still a moving image that exemplifies how we are all here together. We are riders on the earth together. It is amazing to think how God formed the earth and has placed us here. It is amazing to think how he looks down upon us, and in compassion he cares for us. He sustains us this world and all who live in it making sure that the earth stays in its orbit, so that the sun rises and sets as is necessary to maintain life. We are riders on this earth together. We are all brothers and sisters on this bright loveliness in the eternal cold. How remarkable that God would create this place for us and care for us!

What is even more remarkable is that message of which Christmas reminds us! Christmas reminds us that the very God who shaped the heavens and the earth, the very God that hung the stars and arranged the planets in their orbits, that very God of heaven and earth came to live on this terrestrial sphere. He came to walk on this very orb that he formed and that he set into motion. He came to be a rider on this earth together with us, he came to share our humanity, and his foremost purpose in coming was to make satisfaction for our sins, to make us right with God, so that we might be delivered from this place of dirt and dust, pain and death, and be carried by him into the endless realms of heaven for all eternity.

The book of Hebrews serves to emphasize the fact that God himself came into this world to save us. A good portion of chapter 1 and nearly the entirety of Hebrews chapter 2 has to deal with the importance and the significance of God taking on human flesh. Here is just a sample from chapter 2 starting at verse 14. ***14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16 For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. 17 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. 18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.***

Today on Christmas we marvel that God, the creator and sustainer of the universe, would descend to earth for us. We sing songs of praise and joy and we simply sit and marvel that God would come down from heaven above down to earth below to help us. But that’s what he did. And not only that, he came in humility, he came a servant’s form to put on, to serve us and save us, to purify us from all our sins. God left his throne of glory and was placed in a bed of hay for us. He was born under the law to redeem those under the law, to live the life of perfection that God demanded but we could never even hope to provide. God came down to earth, God became our brother, to save those lost in sin, enslaved by Satan, and held captive by the power and fear of death.

Jesus became our brother to provide salvation for all of mankind. This was God’s plan and promise from the beginning. Adam fell and sin and death came into this world and to all men. This world became a much darker place, but God in his love immediately promised a solution; He promised a light that would break the eternal cold. The offspring of the woman; he would crush the serpent’s head. And that offspring would be no ordinary child, but he would be the son of God. He would be Emmanuel, God with us. John in gospel puts it this way, “The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.” Yes, the word that was there at the beginning, the Word that was with God, and the Word that was God. The Word, Jesus the Christ, became flesh and made his dwelling among us (John 1:9, 14). He would become our brother to save us. This child born of Mary is also God so that his sacrifice would count for the sins of all mankind, including yours and mine.

The king of glory would leave his throne of glory to pay for your sins and my sins. The Lord of heaven and earth came to pay for all of your sins. All of them, from what we might consider petty faults, and minor offenses, to the major transgressions, God sees them as all serious, as all deserving of death and hell and punishment. So God in his love and concern came down to earth to bear the sin of the entire world: every sin, every wicked thought, every thoughtless word, every wicked action and criminal transgression. God came to this earth to

live and walk among us. He came to live a perfect in our place. He came to blot out all our transgressions by being one of us. He saved his brothers and sisters by being that perfect son that God our Father demanded and then he died in our place so that we might live.

And God made sure to capture and preserve this promise so that all of mankind could marvel and this good news. He preserved and passed down this good news to us. He did not use color film or a telephoto lens, but God would send picture after picture, promise after promise, through the prophets. The Old Testament people had a more than adequate idea of what the Messiah would be like; hundreds upon hundreds of promises and prophecies given by God to his people through the prophets. And then Jesus came just as he was promised, he came in fulfillment of all the prophecies, and so better than just hearing about the coming Messiah, the Messiah came for all to see.

Imagine for a second if Jim Lovell wasn't able to find the color film for Bill Anders in time. What if they simply had to describe what they had seen and we did not have this photo that was an exact representation of what they saw?! It would not have been nearly as moving to hear their story as it was to see their picture. But the astronauts *were able* to take this picture. And now for 45 years people have been able to marvel together at this remarkable picture and consider life and our existence from this awesome perspective. For 45 years this photo has fascinated the minds of the members of humanity.

Better than just hearing about the coming Messiah, we have been blessed with knowing the Son of God. He has come. We have seen the Son and therefore we have seen the Father. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians, ***"We have seen the glory of God in the face of Christ"*** (2 ***Corinthians 4:6***). We have seen him through the pages of Scripture. We have heard his voice as he went out teaching and preaching. We have seen his care and his compassion as he healed the sick and gave sight to the blind. This is the one who was promised. This is the seed of the woman. This is the almighty God who is full of compassion and abounding with love. This is the Light of the world, who has come to shatter our darkness. This is the fullness of God made flesh, Christ Jesus.

Dear friends, do you know who that is in that manger? Do you really know who that is? This is the son of God who took on flesh to save us. This is the Christ, the anointed one, the one chosen by God to come and save us. Today do you truly recognize the significance of this child?

Christmas has become such a day of tradition that it can happen that going to church has just become part of the tradition. We come and give our respects to the child born in Bethlehem much like we would a child born in the local hospital. We visit, we stand for a moment to adore and we smile, but then quickly we move on. Because it has become such a tradition we fail to truly recognize what has taken place. We no longer marvel with childlike faith at the mystery of God coming to save us, but rather we act more like cynical adults as we stand, we sit, and we are largely unimpressed at a child born in stable. We act like we have seen this all before and our mind may no longer be fascinated by the good news of Christmas. Instead we search out other things that capture our fascination and give our attention to such topics that we deem more worthwhile. And before you know it we take these truths of God's Word and the joy of Jesus and his birth for granted. Instead of taking these truths with us and treasuring them in our hearts throughout the year, instead we leave them here until we visit them again next year.

It is interesting that the writer of the Hebrews starts his entire epistle in this, well, rather odd fashion. It seems that something else had captured the fascination of his primary audience - perhaps the worship of angels. Something else had captured their fascination and so immediately, without even a word of introduction, he discusses this weighty issue that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God. The author refocuses his readers on Christ, who is the exact representation of God in nature and in essence. God came to earth and we know him as Jesus and we know who God is because we know Jesus. God came to redeem us. Jesus, the God-man was sent from the Father. Jesus is greater than the angels. Even though these early believers were closer to Christ in time than we are these early believers seemed to have fallen prey to the temptation that paints the good news of Jesus as a bit stale. From the way this letter is written you can almost imagine the thought process of some of those early believers. *“Yes, yes, yes, we’ve heard all about the man who preached and taught, who live and died, we heard all about this great teacher, but what about the angels?! What about these mysterious heavenly beings? Tell us more about these fascinating angels!”*

And as those early believers were both refocused and encouraged by these words, so are we. Dear friends, do not simply pay a visit to the child born in Bethlehem, but marvel at the miracle of the incarnation. This is news that when rightly observed is always fascinating, it never gets old, never grows stale, because God became flesh to save us. Pause once more to view the events of Christmas from this truly astonishing perspective: The one who created this world came into this world to save us. This is the one who governs the heavens and the earth and the planets in their orbits, and yet he is the one who was born in a tiny town and was wrapped in cloths, and placed in a manger. The eternal God of heaven and earth was born to be our brother, to walk on this terrestrial sphere we call earth, and he came to make us right with God.

Remarkable! Fascinating that God would do this for us! Let us marvel together at the miracle promised and fulfilled and preserved for us. It has been much more than 45 years that this message has been around, but this message of good news will always have the power to fascinate and captivate our minds. It has the power to build and strengthen faith. It has the power to save. Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh. He is the Light of life, who came into the darkness of this world of sin and death. This child born in a humble stall, he is the promised Messiah. He is the one chosen by God to redeem us. The Lord of all the heavens and the earth is the one that saves us. He became our brother and having made atonement for our sins, by a perfect life and a sacrificial death, he then rose from the grave to make us certain of salvation. And then having finished his saving work he was exalted to his throne in heaven once more. And now we know that our God in heaven is also our brother, who cared about us so much to endure the pains of this world. Our brother Jesus rules over all things and one day we who believe in him will reign with him in glory everlasting. What a remarkable joy this message brings! Jesus is true God and he is true man. God our Creator and Redeemer is also our brother. Therefore his birth, God coming to this earth to save us, is a happening, it is an event that bears good news that will never get old no matter how many times the story is told, no matter how many times the songs are sung. May we ever be fascinated by our God’s great love that he would be born into this world to save us! Amen.