

**Hebrews 1:1 - 10 John 1:1 - 14****Hebrews 1**

*In the past God spoke to our ancestors 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 also 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 spirits, and his servants flames of fire."<sup>8</sup> But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a sceptre of justice will be the sceptre 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."*

<sup>10</sup> *He also says, "In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands*

**John 1**

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.<sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning.<sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*

<sup>4</sup> *In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.<sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

<sup>6</sup> *There was a man sent from God whose name was John.<sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe.<sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.*

<sup>9</sup> *The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.<sup>11</sup> He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.<sup>12</sup> Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—<sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

<sup>14</sup> *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

**Intro**

This has been a year of political turbulence and when peace seems to be more elusive than ever. A year when we have learnt to our cost, that however powerful and prosperous and sophisticated we might be, there is no guarantee of making peace. Whether that is the terrible violence in Syria, Iraq and the Yemen, or the political turmoil in Britain, Europe and the United States.

In this context, it might seem utterly absurd that we are celebrating the birth of one baby 2000 years ago to an ordinary couple of humble origins; a baby who was born in the backstreets of a small unimpressive town in a neglected province in a far-flung corner of the Roman Empire. How can the birth of this one baby possibly have any relevance to our divided world today? Or are we simply carrying on a lovely tradition or indulging in a bit of nostalgic escapism before we return to the real world in the new year?

In order to help us understand what the birth of this baby in a stable is all about, both the apostle John and the writer to the Hebrews seem to do what one of those modern TV camera shots do - where the camera shoots up and up and up and rapidly pulls back from the stable, from Bethlehem, from Israel, from planet earth, from the solar system from the

galaxy and gives us a Creator's eye view of the whole cosmos.

Both writers remind us that this baby is none other than the Son of God or as John puts it the *Word* of God, in other words the very expression of God's nature and being. The writer to the Hebrews gives us two more pictures:

1. ***the radiance of God's glory.***

We cannot live without the sun, but we know if we get too close to it we would quickly be completely consumed, fried to a frazzle. But day by day we experience and are blessed by the radiance of the sun, its light and its heat. In the same way, no human being can survive direct contact with God in all his glory, but Jesus is the radiance of that glory, he is the means by which we experience the heat of God's love and the light of his truth.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> picture is rather like that of ***a key being pressed into wax*** to leave an exact impression of all its intricate dimensions. So Jesus is *the exact likeness of God the Father* impressed into the wax of human flesh.

In other words this baby is none other than God himself in human form. After all, when God originally made human beings, he made them in his own image - even though they were soon to distort that image terribly. But when God himself becomes a perfect human being - it is a perfect image of himself. God had to do this because tragically, human beings down through the ages had tried to live without Him and gradually had gone more and more astray. But God could not abandon his children. And so he takes the radical and risky step of entering his own creation as a human being.

Not just to show us how we should live, but in order somehow to redeem humanity itself, to save us from destroying ourselves and restore us to the glorious destiny God had in mind, when he first made us.

This, as we know, took place over 2000 years ago; so why has it made so little difference? Why are we still in a world which is such a mess? As John puts it, even though Christ had made the world, *the world did not recognize him.* <sup>11</sup> *He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.* The majority of the human race either do not recognize Christ or they reject him. No wonder the world continues to be in such a mess. However, that mess is only part of the story.

For John then says "***And yet***", and it is perhaps the biggest "*and yet*" in the whole of human history: *and yet to all who **did** receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.* He changed their nature from being children of the world to being children of God. And He changed their destiny, so that they were no longer heading for destruction - but for glory.,

But it has never been an SAS style rescue mission, where we are helicoptered out of the danger zone to a place of safety, peace and quiet. For all of us who like John have seen the true nature of this baby, this man, this Jesus, full of grace and truth, are called to be like John's namesake, the Baptist, and be witnesses to the light - the light that we find in Christ, the light of God's love, and grace and truth.

The Baptist ended up having his decapitated head served on a carving dish. The Apostle John ended up in exile on the barren island of Patmos. It is never going to be easy. But as John says: *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* Yes, our world is a dark place, but in 2016 more people have discovered the light of God's love and grace than ever before,

more people have opened their hearts to Christ and become children of God than ever before. *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it*

And one day that light will dispel all the darkness forever.