

Hebrews 1:1-4

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[0 : 00] Turn back in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 1.!

But have you lost that sense of wonder? Are you bracing yourself for another festive season? Are you fed up of the sights and sounds of it all?

The opening words of the letter to the Hebrews tell us the first Christmas happened that your eyes and your ears would be filled.

Filled with awe. Not at the sound of Christmas number ones or the sight of tinsel. But that your ears might tingle at a spectacular sound.

The sound of God's voice. We're going to spend the next few Sundays on a Sunday morning leading through Advent in Hebrews chapter 1 and 2.

[1 : 28] Where the writer wants us to hear the sounds of Christmas. And as he opens the letter, the first four verses which we're going to concentrate on this morning he shows us that when Jesus Christ was born in the sounds of the labour and the crying and the cattle it is a moment of history defining speech from God.

Three words that are there in those few verses echo through the book of Hebrews he has spoken. Three words. Don't miss those words. When this baby was born Christmas is about this simple fact never mind how or why or to whom but the simple fact that God has spoken.

Just take that in. He has done that. God has sought communion with us. He's opened himself up to us.

He's opened the channels that we have closed. He's made the unknowable knowable the incomprehensible he's made clear.

[2 : 51] He's spoken in a very very special way and he shows us different ways that he's done that in the first events of that first Christmas.

Three things. He tells us first of all that once he spoke to our fathers but now he speaks to us. Once he spoke to our fathers but now he speaks to us.

Just look at verse 1 there. 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.

I don't know if we realise it this morning. There is such a thing as Christmas. We celebrate Christmas when others have not which means that we are in a unique and privileged position we are hearing things that have never been heard before from God.

Now he's not saying that God did not speak before the first Christmas is he? No. People have heard God speak in many ways in a variety of ways he says in many ways and at many times.

[4 : 13] God has been speaking all along. The Old Testament if you read through it it's full isn't it of different ways that God has spoken full of his divine self-revelation to our fathers to our spiritual ancestors and what they had to listen to was glorious.

They had rich high definition full colour sound. the richness of the varieties in the ways that God spoke to them in story and in poetry and in wisdom and in prose and law in his creation itself.

He spoke in visions and in dreams and appearances of his presence called theophanies. He spoke through his prophets he put his words in their mouths so people could hear him speak to them.

He spoke in many ways and at different times to our fathers to our spiritual ancestors and his voice kept them and guided them set them straight and protected them and saved them was a light to their path.

He spoke to them in a rich and varied manner of ways but now we are told he has spoken like never before to us to us.

[5 : 45] Christmas means we can now hear the same God who spoke to them but he has reserved something for us for us something that they could have only dreamed of hearing from him.

If you flick later on in Hebrews in chapter 11 there's that great chapter full of men and women of faith go and read it later today it's really encouraging men and women of faith who were looking forward to God's promises and the writer tells us that although they were commended through their faith they did not receive what was promised God since God had provided something better for us that apart from us they should not be made perfect God was saying a lot to our fathers a lot to the men and women of the past of long ago but there was one more speech to be made that they would have to wait for that they would be looking forward to that they would be on the edge of their seats but they did not hear it because that day had not arrived when we entered the auditorium God was saving his final act of speech for a people that he had chosen thousands of years later for us the church after the birth death and resurrection of Jesus this side of that first Christmas can you feel how privileged we are a privileged place to hear God speak to us as never before they received wonderful words of promise words of hope looking forward to a world with a saviour a messiah where God would dwell with them a world of peace and of

God's presence wonderful words magnificent words of promise but now a more magnificent word has come to us he was waiting for us to give his final word to us he spoke to our fathers but now he speaks to us secondly he spoke a long time ago but now he speaks to us in these last days he spoke a long time ago but now he speaks to us in these last days we know certain speeches mark time don't they the queen does quite a few speeches during the year I'd imagine but there's one speech where when we hear it we know what time of the year it is when we don't have to look at our watch it's the queen's christmas message isn't it and if you're watching it you know 3pm 25th of December the queen's christmas message marks time it punctuates time she reflects on the past and looks forward to the future there is this kind of seesaw isn't there at 3 o'clock on the 25th of December out with the old in with the new and this it turns out is what happens when God speaks at the birth of Jesus Christ this speech the writer says breaks history in half and you can see the two halves in the passage those first two words there long ago and then there's another half of history the second age no he doesn't call it that does he he says no long ago God spoke then but in these last days God speaks God speech marks time BC and AD there's no middle ages or dark ages or internet age with God in his mind just two ages in history matter the time before I sent my son and the time after and

God speaks in these last days the revelation of Jesus Christ in his final words is the last chapter of everything of all history before he returns he is now closing down the show of history the curtains are about to be drawn he is wrapping up history with this speech and so this speech at that first Christmas the one that we are hearing becomes all the more pressing and all the more urgent for us one that we must listen to in these last days but it also becomes all the more exciting because what our fathers had hoped for is now even closer and just imagine for a moment being shown around a wonderful house and we watched

[11:15] Mary Berry going around a stately home it's brilliant you should watch it she goes around the house where they filmed Downton Abbey watch it on iPlayer but imagine being shown around a stately home this house Downton Abbey has 200 rooms beautiful grounds and imagine being shown around and there are wonderful people that live there wonderful people to love and to be loved by and it's run by a master of the house who is caring and protecting for everyone who is there or even a city imagine a city where life is right being shown around given a tour where the king of the city is kind and loving and it's a wonderful place to live Hebrews tells us late ago that long ago this is what our fathers were looking forward to Isaiah says behold the

Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth say to the daughter of Zion the city of Zion behold your salvation comes behold his reward is with him and his recompense before him Abraham we're told in chapter 11 was looking forward to that city that has foundations whose designer and builder is God but it's as if our fathers were shown around the city they were shown around the house but they're kind of feeling around they're touching the buildings and they're touching the furniture they're feeling around the artwork but the lights aren't fully on yet the day hadn't dawned they have this sense of where things are and how God is going to bring his salvation what kind of God he is going to be ruling over this great city and now he is saying as they looked in shadow and in the darkness feeling their way around we can now see everything in the daylight

God himself has come to turn the lights on we can now see his salvation his character his being we can see him like never before the time of the last things is here a time of fulfillment a time of substance not shadow a time of hearing God's fully rounded voice full bodied voice literally we

moan about our times don't we it's like a British national sport moaning about the times that we live in what a time to be born in 2017 with Brexit and whatever else it is Edward Young Rebecca Rossini born in 2017 but if you are here now and you've been born this side of the first

Christmas what a time to be born in long ago our fathers I'm sure they would have looked and said imagine those people imagine those people who will be born in the last days the things that they will hear we can only imagine Peter speaks of the prophets and he says it was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you in the things that have now been announced to you things in which angels long to look long ago God appeared to Abraham but he could only dream of the sight of God incarnate as a man with flesh on veiled in flesh the Godhead see long ago Moses who saw God in the burning bush what a sight it was would long to see

God in the face of Jesus Christ he would be staggered by the incarnation long ago Solomon who saw a vision of God in a dream could only dream that someone might say we have touched him and seen him and eaten with him come and behold him born the king of angels long ago the people who received the words of God through the prophets would have quivered at the thought of the word become flesh long ago those who penned the scriptures inspired by the Holy Spirit they would not even know the implications of what they were writing that the creator and the author of creation himself would come and be a creature and he would enter into history into the story what days we live in where we know things into which angels long to look these last days he spoke to our fathers now he speaks to us long ago now in these last days and thirdly he spoke through the prophets but now he speaks to us through his son he spoke through the prophets but now he speaks to us in his son communication is a very complex thing isn't it it's so often the case that it's not just what you say but it's how you say it that matters isn't it

[17:21] I need reminding of that home at home every single day and every time I speak it's not what you say it's how you say it how you say things changes how people hear you doesn't it so it feels different getting a text message as it does getting a handwritten letter it feels different getting an email than somebody speaking to you face to face and the amazing thing of Christmas is not that God has spoken just that fact but it's the way he's spoken Christmas tells us that God hasn't just sent us a note or a letter in the post he has turned up not just through a prophet or a teacher although they were magnificent ways of speaking he has spoken in a revelation of his son in whom all the fullness of the

Godhead dwells bodily look at verse 3 there 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 he is the rays of the light of God's divine presence God from God light from light true God from true God he has and always will be the perfect disclosure of God's being of his nature he is God revealed to man and because God has spoken to us in this way in his son through the wonder of a virgin birth of God clothing himself in human flesh we hear God speak to us more magnificently than ever before this speech stands head and shoulders above all the other ways that

God has spoken because Jesus does not just bring us a revelation of God but he is the revelation of God himself he doesn't just disclose God's message in his teaching he is the message it's not what you say it's how you say it we hear him speaking to us in such an appealing tone in the language of our earthliness of our street he comes right to our front door and he levels with us there's a list going around of extravagant ways that men have proposed to their girlfriends one guy his girlfriend likes swimming so he trained a dolphin to bring a message to her so while she was swimming this dolphin turned up with a bottle around its neck saying will you marry me

I wish I'd thought of that it's amazing isn't it but here God speaks and brings a proposal to us in the most extravagant way imaginable by contracting himself down into a womb into a body so that he can come to the very front door of our humanity it's really him but is he just all talk what is so great about hearing from God anyway so what you might say well we see here don't we that his word is not just information it's not just explanation God knows we don't just need facts or encouragements or thoughts to ponder we need him to actually do something don't we his words need to have wings in our lives and we see don't we that this word is a doing word see where this word goes his revelation is about our redemption just look at the end of verse three this word came the radiance of the glory of

God and after making purification for sins he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high God speaks at Christmas and his words have action Jesus comes and makes purification and he sat at the right hand of the majesty on high this is how he comes to us and this is why he comes to us

what his words are about are doing something doing something tremendously good in our lives purifying us as we go through the first couple of chapters of Hebrews we'll see that Hebrews was written to a church who are beginning to miss hear what God is saying they're thinking he's saying things that he isn't and they're at risk of neglecting what God is saying and that is the root of our problem actually of thinking that God is saying one thing when he isn't when he said something else and we kind of fill in the gaps with what we think he's saying where did that go wrong when did [23 : 12] God start saying things that are bad it's never been the case it started didn't it with that question that Satan asked Adam and Eve in the garden did God actually say he puts doubt into God's word and all sin all of our problem is founded on a mistrust of God's speech we say if I listen to his word it will ruin me if I accept Jesus it will ruin me it will make my life worse off but can we see what God is doing in the first Christmas he is turning our ears back to him speaking good into our lives seeking to purify us to be our loving Lord he is saying in the incarnation this is me speaking to you kindly and mercifully

I found out this week that the Queen's Speech is not actually called the Queen's Speech officially the formal name given to the Queen's Speech is Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech the birth of Jesus Christ is His Majesty's Most Gracious Speech Church when we look at the manger and the man who was born to die to make purification for sin God says read my lips it is the most extravagant way that I could speak to you and it's the kindest thing that I could say to purify and cleanse you in my words in my son and as we respond we want to say back to him don't we it's not just what you say

God it's how you said it and we worship you for him for your son won't you speak to me God this Christmas well let your ears be filled with this word with the true sound of Christmas a word sent to us in these last days in his son sent to purify and do us good let's pray together