

A few moments ago, we heard our Epistle reading from the book of Hebrews. Hebrews deals with what's behind the curtain of the Christmas story.

In front of the curtain is the familiar Christmas story we heard last night. In front of the curtain is a decree from Caesar Augustus, shepherds keeping watch in the fields, no room at the inn, a baby lying in a manger. But behind the curtain is something far more important. And Hebrews tells us about it.

Hebrews starts:

"Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son..."¹ Don't miss what Hebrews is saying. God has spoken. Long ago--by the prophets. Recently--by a Son.

In other words, God spoke in many and various ways through the prophets in the past. But if you want the latest and best message, look to the Son. Why?

Hebrews says, "He (this Son) is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word."²

That's an amazing description. The Son is the perfect reflection of God. The Son is the exact carbon copy of God. Hebrews is saying, long ago God spoke through the prophets. But if you want to see the latest, most recent, and most exact picture of God, then look at the Son. The Baby in the Manger. The Crucified and Risen Lord. The Exalted One who sits, who reigns at God's right hand in glory.

In other words, if you want to know God most perfectly, look at Jesus Christ. There are lots of ways that God speaks in the world. God sends his message through intermediaries, like prophets or angels. God's fingerprints are all over creation. God speaks in many other ways as well. But the most perfect, the most complete message comes from Jesus. With Jesus, there's no middleman. God speaks directly, using the mouth of Jesus.

In front of the Christmas curtain, we see a simple little baby, wrapped in cloth, lying in a manger. In front of the curtain he looks small, powerless, and insignificant. But don't be fooled. Behind the curtain, this little baby is the true power that undergirds the entire universe.

In fact, Hebrews reminds us that this little baby was God's agent in creating the entire universe. Through the Son, Hebrews says, God created the worlds.³

It's the same message from our glorious Gospel reading from John. "All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being."⁴

So don't be fooled by this baby. He is not just a baby who will one day grow up to be a great philosopher. He is not just a baby who will be a great teacher. He is so much more than

¹ Heb 1:1

² Heb 1:3

³ Heb 1:2

⁴ John 1:2

that. He is God's exact reflection. He is God's exact imprint. When Jesus looks out of his manger, God is seeing the world through his eyes. When Jesus speaks, God is talking directly.

If you've come here on Christmas just to celebrate the birthday of an important historical figure, then you've missed what's behind the curtain.

This is no ordinary birth. This is no ordinary baby.

In this baby, God is present in the world in a new and intimate way. God is present in an absolutely unique way, that has not occurred before or since.

We're not here to remember the birth of a mere baby. We're here to celebrate God coming into the world, living as a human being, in the person of Jesus Christ.

And the angels know this. They know what's going on. In front of the curtain, the angels may appear to be the top of the pecking order. But behind the curtain, the angels know who's really at the top. Behind the curtain they know who this baby truly is. They know that he is God's only begotten Son. And the angels also know how they themselves compare to that baby.

Hebrews says, "(The Son is) as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs."⁵

Angels are powerful and glorious creatures. But Jesus is far more powerful and far more glorious. His name is vastly superior to any of their names.

Jesus: God Saves

The Christ: God's anointed

Emmanuel: God with us.

There is only one Son of God. The angels know who he is. And they know their place in relationship to him. In the presence of the Son, God has a standing order: "Let all God's angels worship him."⁶

In front of the curtain, the angels *seem* to reign supreme. Behind the curtain, they all fall down in worship before the Son of God.

So at Christmas, remember to go deeper. Remember to look behind the curtain.

That little baby in the manger, who is lying there, not doing much of anything. He is much more than he appears to be. In that baby, God has come into the world. God's Son has been born as a human being. He has come to bring us Good News. He has come to bring us life and light.

⁵ Heb 1:4

⁶ Heb 1:6

Pay close attention to what's going on behind the curtain. The angels of God are gathered together. The angels of God are bowing down.

Let all God's angels worship Jesus Christ. Let all God's people do the same.