

“OUR HOPE: JESUS SEES IT ALL”

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Hebrews 4:12-13

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and Spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

The first-century Jewish converts were tempted to practice a religion of Jesus plus. They had become so comfortable and dependent on the external rituals of Judaism, they found it difficult to place full trust and hope in Jesus only. To be on the safe side, absolutely sure they were covering all the religious bases, they were seriously considering what they might add to that which Jesus had done for them on the cross.

This is not only unnecessary, but impossible. Nothing can be added to Christ's work on the cross. Everything necessary for the salvation of sinners has been done. All we can do is take the life He offers. Rejoice in it. Grow in our knowledge and appreciation of it.

The ancient Israelites missed the rest God prepared for them in the Promised Land because of the twin sins of disobedience and distrust. We Christians face the same problem. There is a Canaan for Christians called the abundant life. It not only includes peace with God, but an experience of the peace of God. However, if you fail to trust and obey Christ fully, you will miss out on your promised land just as those Israelites missed theirs. Therefore, strive, not in the sense of working for salvation, but of maintaining eternal vigilance against the tempter's snare, to enter that rest (4:10).

Learn from the sad experience of those who died in the wilderness of unbelieving self-sufficiency. Follow the heavenly Joshua as He leads you into the promised land and on to claim all of the

Christian’s Canaan. Thus the book of Hebrews speaks to us today.

We are urged to be diligent. To hasten to enter that rest and know the peace of God, lest we be swayed by such an example of disobedience. Jesus knows our heart. *“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do”* (4:12,13).

Many commentators take our text to be a kind of parenthetical statement which is foreign to the author’s main argument, as if this is a strange place for this passage concerning the power of the word of God to occur. However, if we can grasp the full significance of this phrase, *“the word of God,”* we will see this tiny paragraph as the next natural step in the author’s thrilling unfolding of the absolute supremacy and sufficiency of Christ.

A Word About The Word

Scholars differ as to the true or full meaning of the phrase, *“word of God.”* Some take it to be the gospel. The Good News. The inspired and authoritative word of hope that God, who hates sin, loves sinners and has taken the initiative to open a way whereby sinners can come back into relationship with him.

Others take the phrase to mean the whole process of God’s revelation of Himself through creation, the scriptures and incarnation. Still others say *“the word of God”* refers to all Holy Spirit inspired words of insight, whether they come from laymen or clergymen, prophet or pastor, teacher or evangelist. They argue, and quite accurately, that God has revealed many wonderful things about Himself through sermons, songs, poems and books. Certainly none of us would argue the fact that gifted, Spirit-filled men and women have been used of God to punch holes in the walls of our ignorance, helping us to see through to some great truth which lifted us to new levels of spiritual life and understanding.

Other scholars hold *“the word of God”* to mean the Bible. Quite probably this is the most common use of the phrase. When folk talk about Bible study, we often hear them speak of

getting into “the word.” There’s validity here, for the Bible is God’s written word. It does not merely contain the word of God. Or merely become the word of God. It is the written word of God. The Bible is God’s revelation of Himself in language, even as creation is God’s revelation of Himself in space, and Jesus is God’s revelation of Himself in human flesh.

Christians love this book. Preach this book. Probe this book to find the spiritual treasures hidden in it. Having said that, we must remember what Jesus said to the Pharisees, “*You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life*” (John 5:39,40). In other words, we must never permit the Bible to become an end in itself.

The same is true of all God’s channels of self-revelation. Sometime ago Lucille and I visited Muir Woods, the beautiful redwood forest near Santa Cruz, California. It was an inspiring experience. Some of those majestic trees are incredible. They were well developed over 2,000 years ago when Jesus was on earth. Frankly, we were both overwhelmed. Lucille, in her own way, expressed this. I found myself quietly singing, “Great is thy faithfulness, Oh God, my Father, there is no shadow of turning with thee.” A deep sense of tranquility and trust surged through us as we stood beneath these noble giants. But with all their grandeur and beauty neither Lucille nor I worshipped them. Instead, we were drawn by them to worship the God who created them!

The same stance should be maintained in our use of scripture. I spend a great deal of time in the Bible. During a typical week when I have a full preaching and teaching load, I will spend up to forty hours in study alone. But, as I pour over this Book, seeking to extract the wonderful truths God has put in it, I do not view the Bible as an end in itself. It is a means to the end -- the Lord Jesus, Himself.

Again and again, I see the loving Father there. My face and heart are lifted to Him and I say “Thank you, Father, for yourself. For the knowledge that in having you I have all I need and more besides.” At other times it is Jesus who leaps out of these pages with fresh meaning. I find myself saying, “Jesus, thank you for loving me, accepting me, saving me and bringing healing to

my heart and life.” Often the Holy Spirit captures my attention and I quietly pray, “Thank you, blessed Holy Spirit, for making Jesus and the loving Father so real to me!”

The Bible is not the center of our worship. God is! This book leads us off from itself to its Author. It is in Him we rest, not in it. This is something we must remember as we move toward the goal of spiritual maturity. The challenge is to be Bible Christians without being Biblicists. We must learn to “*rightly divide the word of truth*” (2 Timothy 2:15), so as to not become wooden literalists who limit the power of Scripture to speak to our time. Bibliolatry is just another form of idolatry, and it has the same deadening effect upon our spirit.

Now, if those who say Hebrews 4:12 refers to the Bible are correct, then what we have here is a profound statement about the Old Testament. For, when the book of Hebrews was written, the New Testament did not exist. Of course, there are many wonderful and precious truths in the Old Testament, but Hebrews is not about the Old Testament. It is about Jesus. The opening paragraph says, “*God, who in times past, that is, Old Testament times, spoke through (Old Testament) prophets, has at long last spoken (notice the allusion to the word) through His Son!*”

Hebrews is about Jesus. That’s one clue. But the clincher for me is the double reference to the personal pronouns “*his*” and “*him*,” in 4:13. “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” The references are clearly to a person. Putting all the above mentioned evidence together, I’m convinced the phrase “*word of God*,” as used here, is a reference to Jesus.

Jesus is “*the word*.” It is Jesus who is “*living and active*.” Who cuts to the very core of our being. Who scrutinizes the thoughts and motivations of our heart. From whom nothing is hidden. Before whom we all stand open and bare. Jesus sees it all. And it is Jesus with whom we all must ultimately deal. Jesus is “*the word*.”

If you’re still not convinced, consider a parallel passage from the Gospel of John.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him; and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1a, 11-14, emphasis mine).

The parallel between those things said about Jesus in the first chapter of John and in the first two chapters of Hebrews is absolutely staggering. This “Son” of God spoken of in Hebrews 1:2,5 and John 1:14 first parallel, is the One described in Hebrews 1:2 and John 1:3 through whom creation was accomplished, second parallel. In a third parallel, Hebrews 1:3 says He “*reflects the glory of God*,” and John 1:4,14 says He reveals the light of God’s likeness to men. In a fourth parallel Hebrews 1:4,6 declares He was superior to angels, and John 1:1 declares He was God Himself. For a little while according to Hebrews 2:7, He was made “*lower than the angels*,” and in a fifth parallel John 1:14 says, He “*became flesh to dwell among us*,” that He “*might taste death for every one*” (Hebrews 2:9) and give men the “*power to become children of God*” (John 1:12) which is a sixth parallel). We could go on, but as you can see, the unity of the two passages is unmistakable.

In John, the personal pronouns “*He*” and “*Him*” are clear references to Jesus, the living Word. The personal pronouns “*His*” and “*Him*” in Hebrews 4:13, repeat the emphasis. To me, the evidence is overwhelming. The writer of Hebrews is saying “*the word of God*” is Jesus!

Some commentators divide verses 12 and 13. They argue the former speaks of the Bible and the latter of Jesus. But the central message of Hebrews is Jesus, not the Old Testament. The whole thrust of this book is to point out who Jesus was, what Jesus did, and how far superior Jesus is to anything the Old Testament reveals.

To preach the word is to preach Jesus. To know the word is to know Jesus. To be known by the word is to be known by Jesus. To lead people into the word is to lead people into Jesus. To probe the word is to probe Jesus -- His length, breadth, height and depth -- the wonder of this One to whom all things are known, and with whom all men must ultimately deal (4:13).

Jesus Reveals Us To Ourselves

Jesus, the word of God, is “*living and active*” (4:12). What a thrilling statement about the present ministry of Christ among us!

Earlier I wrote briefly of the “heart as the control center of life.” To grasp the full wonder of the Word’s, that is, Jesus’ current activity on our behalf, further development is in order. Now I recognize that no man-made diagram is ever fully sufficient for illustrating Biblical insights. However, the following diagrams have proven helpful to me in understanding the work of Christ’s Spirit in each of us.

All of creation has a body. That is, everything in the created order has certain physical properties and characteristics which distinguish it from every other thing. The body of gold is different from the body of granite. The body of an apple is different from that of an orange. The body of a cat is different from the body of a cow. In the following graphic we will use a simple circle to illustrate that which is common to all creation -- a body.