

When we read the book of Hebrews we encounter a community of Christians living in a time of trial, a community not so different from ours as we might at first think. Like us they are trying to understand God and God's purposes, even in the midst of struggle and suffering.

The message of the book is our message too – their story is our story.

The specific forms of what will threaten our faith will vary culturally around the world and over time. But the call to faith and the Christ in whom we trust remain the same.

The first century Jewish Christians to whom this letter was written were distracted and discouraged, they faced significant persecution and the temptation to turn away from their faith was strong and pressing.

Endless distractions bombard us. The array of devices and channels through which we can connect to an endless stream of media provide us with never ending temptations to worry or to place our trust in false idols. In the midst of all this we think we're doing ok if we hold it all together and manage to look after ourselves and each other.

In the midst of this it can be difficult to remember to look to Jesus....and yet above every reason for discouragement or distraction from our faith, above our urgent needs, our great High priest, Jesus sits enthroned at the right hand of God. Far higher than the angels in rank and rule. The angels worship him.....they are simply servants.....the messengers....Jesus is the message. The ultimate revelation of God, he is God himself, eternal king, ruling with justice, the creator and sustainer of all things whose enemies will be a footstool for his feet.

In these verses Christ sits in this exalted position of authority over all because of who he is and what he did, his sin bearing death and his resurrection have confirmed his power and authority, demonstrating that there is nothing that can stand against him, having conquered sin and death, Jesus rose victorious. And from his throne at the right hand of God he will come again to finally establish his kingdom of righteousness and peace

In contrast to this exalted Son of God, the angels are ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation. What a contrast! Christ the exalted Son, creator and Lord of all. Angels, the servants of saved sinners.

These are bold claims....what we call high Christologyand we've become a little shy, I fear of making such bold claims for Jesus in our pluralist modern world. We don't wish to offend others, rightfully so. We want to stress the validity of other points of view....which is not a bad thing in itself but I think we might that at the expense of saying what it is we actually believe. We can say what it is we believe without denigrating others, after all but we have become diffident about the defining character of our faith...our answer to the question: who is Jesus?

If we don't make these claims for Christ then what will we claim?

If we don't know what we stand for then how will others?

If we don't make the point about who and what we worship then we can't be surprised when others don't see the point.

Jesus is our friend and he is our brother and we share life in Him. Let's be careful though that our relationship doesn't make us downplay the significance of the statements made about Jesus Christ in this first chapter of Hebrews. What they claim for Christ is the ultimate. He is Lord and Creator. He is eternal. He has total authority. He is God.

Deeply rooted in this sermon delivered to the Hebrews is a sense of urgency. The same sense of urgency exists today. The first readers of these verses were on the brink of deserting the faith, of reneging on their confession that Jesus is Lord, and turning their backs on the salvation he had purchased for them. We too are at risk. We are risk of misreading the demands of the gospel and misreading the needs of our world as well. I am convinced that the world more than ever needs people who are prepared to own the truth that shapes their lives.