

CHRISTMAS DAY - God Exposed

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Date: 25 December 2000

Preacher: Paul Barker

[0 : 0 0] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity On Christmas Day 2000 The preacher is Paul Barker His sermon is entitled God Exposed And is from Hebrews chapter 1 Verses 1 to 4 Thank you that you have spoken to people Through the ages from the beginning of history That pre-eminently you have spoken through your Son And we pray that in Jesus you will speak to us today For his sake we pray, Amen Our world seems to have an endless fascination With the rich and the famous We want to know what they are like We want to know what they do in their private lives And what they say We want to feel as if we really know them And if you doubt that You just have to look at the magazine racks

In every newsagent And to discover that we are fascinated By rich and famous people We want to be as if Madonna and Guy Are our best friends And we were at their wedding It's as if we want to really know Posh and Bex Who knows why But we seem to And we want to feel as though Will and Harry are our own children And all the magazines And all the magazines And the newsagents And in Coles And wherever else you go Tell us Or try to tell us What these rich and famous people Are really like So there seems to be An incredible interest In the fact that William cleaned toilets in Chile In the clothes that Madonna Was going to wear the other day In David Beckham's role as a father In the personal stories of the Olympians For example It wasn't enough that we saw them On a gold medal pedestal But rather we want to know What they're like What they do How they're trained And what they say

Etc Part of the intrigue Of the rich and famous Is that they are remote from us And that they to an extent Guard their privacy After all If they told us everything And showed us everything About their lives No one would be interested anymore So there's an element In which they guard their privacy And just show little glimpses Sort of to keep up the aura And the mystique Of being remote And rich and famous Earlier this year A book One of hundreds it seems Was published about The Queen Mother Who turned of course a hundred So there are at least A hundred books published And one of them in particular Was almost scandalous Because it suggested that Rather than being such a noble And grand lady That people in Britain And around the world Have thought she's been For the last hundred years She was in fact A rather selfish snob Well that private And remote lady Was being exposed In a way that Shocked people Who knows what is true

About her Well maybe the newsstands Don't have the same Sort of fascination For the remote And famous God But people do People want to know About God Is he just remote And unknowable Just sort of rich And famous Is it that the news stories Don't carry him As much as the other people Because there are not All that many Photo opportunities for God Not all that many Glamorous pictures That we can see Of God at weddings And christenings And on football fields For example But ask the average person What God is like And they'll give you The sort of answer Along the lines of Well I'm not really sure I don't really know I think God's too much Full of mystery And remoteness And privacy He's an unknowable Sort of God He's a private Reclusive sort of God

No doubt Everybody has some Picture or dream Or image Of what they Think God is like Or what they want God to be like An old man With a bushy beard The archetypal Santa Claus For example Or an ageless Male version Of Mother Teresa Perhaps Or maybe As Madonna Thinks An impersonal But positive Force In the world And in people The unknowable God you see In the end Becomes the God That you create A figment Of your own Imagination Spike Milligan Says I think echoing The words Or thoughts At least Of thousands Of people In the world I pray Fervently But I've no idea Who I'm praying to What is God Like then Can't the magazines And the tabloids Get us a scoop On God Aren't there Some holiday Snaps somewhere Of God Camping Or skiing In winter Isn't there even

[5 : 06] A photo of God Cleaning up Somebody else's Mess I mean if it's Good enough For Prince William Why not For God Well thankfully God is not A heavenly Recluse With a silent Number He isn't Unknowable And he doesn't Spend his days Hiding behind Clouds From NASA Satellites Nor has he Been discovered By intrepid Journalists But rather God has Spoken God has Revealed Himself God hasn't Kept quiet About himself He's spoken From the Beginning of Time in fact The very Third verse Of the Bible Is God Speaking Let there Be light He said And there Was And to the First people That were Created Adam and Eve They're called In the Bible God spoke And to the Next generation God speaks And for Generation After generation Through century After century In what's Called the Old Testament Part of The Bible

God is Speaking And time And again We hear Prophets and Other people Saying Thus says The Lord So God Has spoken He's a Speaking God He's not Unknowable And he's not Remote He's not Totally mystery He's not Totally private And reclusive But he's a God Who speaks And the Opening verse Of the First Bible Reading today Made that Point very Clearly In many And various Ways For times Past The writer Said God Has spoken To our Ancestors By the Prophets But now The writer Of that part Of the New Testament Says Something Significant Has changed The writer Was writing In the Middle part Of the First century A.D.

Twenty After the Death and Resurrection Of Jesus Christ And he Says Now Something Significant Has changed In the Past God Spoke in All sorts Of different Ways By prophets But now He has Spoken By a Son Now God Is speaking Differently Now God is Speaking Fully Perfectly If you Like Through Son Through Jesus Christ Seven Things About Jesus Are Said In Just Those First Three Verses That Were Read For Us In The First Bible Reading I'm Not Going To Comment About All Of Them Just A Couple One Of The Things That's Said About Jesus In That Reading Is That He Is The Reflection Of God's Glory Not A Reflection That Is A Sort Of Dim Reflection Like You Might See In A Lake You Can Just Make Out A Tree Or A Hill Or Something Sort

Of Silhouetted In The Lake This Is A Perfect Reflection The Word Is A Strong Word To Denote An Exact Reflection That Is Seen In Jesus Christ It Is An Unmediated It Is A Pure Reflection Of God Himself It Is Not A Sketch Plan It Is Not Just A Little Outline Drawing Of God's Glory Or God's Person But It Is The Unadulterated Reflection Of God And The Idea Of Being A Reflection Of God's Glory Whenever God's Glory Is Manifest In The Bible It Is God Himself Who Is Present So When The Glory Fills The Temple In The Old Testament It Is Because God Is Present When God's Glory Is Seen Here Or There Or In Other Places It Is Because God Is Present And Just As It Said In A Second Reading As Well We've Seen God's Glory It Is Because God Is Present So When The Writer Of This Letter To The Hebrews Says Jesus Is The Reflection Of God's Glory

And A Perfect Reflection At That He Means He's Saying In Effect God Is Present God Has Spoken To Us By Being Present In His Son Jesus Christ It's The Real Thing God Himself And The Next Expression That's Used To Describe Jesus Is That He Is The Exact Imprint Of God's Very Being The Word To Be An Exact Imprint Is The Word In The Ancient World That's Used For A Stamp Or A Seal On A Coin Or On A Medal Or Perhaps In A Seal That Seals Up A Letter It Is An Exact Replica Of The Real Thing It Is A Full Representation If You Like Of God's Character We Might Say Today He's The Spitting Image Of His Father In Effect That's What This Is Saying That Jesus Is The Spitting Image Of Replica Or

[9 : 57] Imprint Of His Father Not Just In Little Ways It's Not Just That One Aspect Of Jesus Is Like God But Rather That In Every Way Jesus Is God An Exact Replica See He's More Than Just A Good Man More Than Just A Decent Chap More Than Just A Wise Person He Is In Every Way God Himself Fully Divine And Yet Almost Paradoxically Fully Human So Christmas Is God Saying This Is What I'm Like It Is God Giving Us A Scoop If You Like Better Than A Picture Scoop Or A News Magazine Article It Is God Saying This Is Who I Am In All Its Fullness I'm Not Holding Anything Back Here But I'm Speaking To You In Jesus Not Like In The

Past When I'd Say Just Little Things About The World And About Myself Now I'm Telling You Everything There Is To Know About Myself Look At Jesus See Jesus That's Me God Is Saying You Want To Know What I'm Like Look At Jesus Is What God Is Saying At Christmas Now When God Has Spoken By A Son As It's Literally By Son That is It's Not By A Son As Though There's One Of Many Sons As Though There's Many Ways In Which God Speaks But There Is A Uniqueness About This Son That Is Captured In That Expression Which Literally Our Bible Translations Don't Quite Get Right That Is Jesus Is The Unique And The Exclusive Revelation Of God You Know How The Magazines And The A Heading Exclusive Scoop Or Exclusive

Story It's Only In The Age Or It's Only A New Idea The Exclusive Pictures Of Madonna's Wedding Or The Exclusive Pictures Of Posh And Bex Or William In Chile Or Whatever It Is Jesus Is God's Exclusive Revelation The Only Perfect Revelation Of God You'll Find You Don't Find It In Other Wise People Or Other Good People Or Other Religious People Jesus Is The Exclusive Speech Of God Revealing God To This World He's Unique So Don't Be Misled Down Dead End Paths Of Trying To Find God God Spoken He's Declared To Us All Very Clearly What He's Like And What He's On About Jesus Is Where We Look To Find Out What Do We Find When We See Jesus It's All Very Well To Say That God Through Jesus But What Is It That He Says Well Two

Things In The Paragraphs That Follow Capture That In A Nutshell One Is That Jesus And God Are The Creator And Sustainer Of The World They're Sovereign They're In Charge They Made It And They're Keeping It Going They Made Us And They're Keeping Us Going As Well Secondly At The First Paragraph Of This Letter It Says That He Made Purification For Sins See Not Only Is God Sovereign And Creator Of All Things But God In Jesus Purifies Sin He Cleans Up The Mess That You You Could See In New Idea Or Women's Weekly Or One Of Those Papers The Other Day A Picture Of Prince William In Chile Cleaning The Toilets In The Dorms I Mean Who Cares Really But God Has Cleaned Up A Bigger Mess That He Didn't Make That

We Made And He Cleans It Up By Jesus And Dying For Us On A Cross That's What God's He's The Cleaner Upper The One Who Cleans Up Our Mess Who Purifies Our Sins So That We Can Be Right With God You Want To Know What God's Like You Want To Know What God's Purposes For This World And For Us Are Jesus Is Where We Find Out Because He's There He Came To Clean Up Our Mess You Want To See A Holiday Snap A Scoop Photo Of God Going Camping In Summer Jesus Is It God Come To Earth As A Human To Camp Or Pitch His Tent On Earth For 30 Years Or So That's God On Holidays Well Not Really On Holidays He Was Working To Clean Up Our Mess You Want To See A Picture Of God Doing The Cleaning Up Of Somebody Else Mess Jesus Is It Dying On A Cross

[14 : 59] See In A He's All You Need To See All You Need To Know About God The Final Word The Full Word Now Notice too That In All Of This It Is God Who Takes The Initiative See God Doesn't Play A game Of Hide And Seek With The World Saying Come On People Of The World You Come And Find Out About Me See If You Can Track Me Down In Some Heavenly Cloud Or Kingdom Somewhere We Never Do It We Never

Find Him The Only Reason We Know Anything About God At All Is Because God Tells Us And He Tells Us All We Need To Know In Jesus Christ It Is God's Initiative That's What God's Like You See He's Not Playing Games With Us He's Not Saying Oh Come On Guys You've Got To Find Me He Says I'll Come To You I'll Come All The Way To You Down To Earth And Live As A Human Being And There Am I In My Fullness Grace Upon Grace Was The Term Used In John's Gospel But This Also Has An Implication For Us Too If God Speaks Our Obligation Is To Listen God Speaks We Must Listen Most People Aren't Good Listeners You See That In The School Playground At Lunchtime Every Child Is Eager To Tell Their Story About What They've Done Better Than The Previous Story But

How Few Are Actually Listening I Guess You See It In Staff Canteen Rooms Or Work Places We're Eager To Tell The Exciting Stories Of Our Life But We're Much Less Eager To Listen To Others We Cannot Make The Same Mistake With God God Has Spoken And Jesus Is His Word And We Cannot Afford Not To Listen To Him To Listen To Him To Believe His Promises And To Obey His Commands God Is A Speaking God He's Not Total Mystery He's Not Totally Unknowable He's Not Absolutely Remote And He's Certainly Not The Figment Of Our Imaginations He's A Speaking God He's Been Speaking Since He Began To Create But He's Spoken All That He Needs To Speak In His Son Jesus Christ So

At Christmas We Thank God That God Has Spoken In Jesus But We Also Remind Ourselves That We Must Listen We Must Listen To Him Trust His Promises And Obey His Commands To Tat To Are Hat To