



Ministry of the Word

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Scripture: Hebrews 1:1-2

Subject: Chapter 1 – Part 1: In the Beginning, God.

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ²has in these last days spoken to us by *His Son*, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;”

When Jesus died, rose again, then ascended to heaven, the spirit of God came down as promised and infilled the apostles and disciples of Jesus. When the book of Hebrews was written, most of the early church at that point were Jews and the Temple was still standing, the ceremonies were still being performed, and tradition was alive and kicking. Some of the converted Jews were starting to feel the pressure of persecution and the pull to go back was heavy.

God addressed their situation by reminding these converted Jews of the better way which He revealed through His son Jesus Christ. Hebrews established this for us step by step. The term “contrast” is never missing. All the way the Spirit leads us, He is forever making the comparisons between the old and the new for us. While there was, and still is, a price to be paid in following the Lord Jesus Christ truly in our lives, and allowing Him to be Master, there are so many who want to rule in our life and the majority are not real friends. The better way of life described to us in Hebrews, is Jesus. Hebrews is not just about the theology but also

about the practicalities of life which is why there is an application in this book for the non-Jew, or Gentile as they are known by the Jews, historically as well as today. The author of Hebrews expresses the evidence for the superiority of Christianity over Judaism, while confirming the divine authority of Judaism as it was then. For it was God, and not man that spoke and was listened to, as well as recorded to their forefathers. The oracles of God were entrusted to their forefathers and written by Moses and the prophets for their way of life. The Jews were the only ones to possess the Scriptures in written form from the one, true living God. Apart from that, God had also displayed His divine Will in innumerable ways. God is bigger than we could ever think or imagine. It was and is always God who makes the first move, we see this from Genesis to Revelation. God reaching down into the human sphere, all be it a fallen human sphere. God's revelation is about saving man from the power as well as the penalty of sin, from the very start as we see it in Genesis.

God – This is how the book of Hebrews begins, with God. Like in the beginning, everything begins with God. The book of Hebrews is a book of redemption which all begins and ends with God. The great work of redemption was slowly revealed all through the Old Testament and then suddenly realised in the New Testament. Just like in Genesis, time, space, matter, form and order, begins with God and ends with God. We must realise that anything that doesn't begin or end with God in our lives, be it motivations, purpose, interests, plans, activities, philosophies, beliefs, anything that we hold on to that doesn't start or end with God, will ultimately become our enemy in the end. We are children of God and are called to live our lives in the light of immortality.

In verse 1 we also see that God speaks. A silent God is an unknown God. A speaking God is a God expressing and revealing Himself. The God of scripture is not speechless like other deity, unlike the idols of the heathen, God is not dumb. He is nothing like the god's of men or religion. At the very outset of Genesis in creation we see Him speaking Genesis 1:3

“Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.”

The first recorded thing spoken by God was – ‘Let there be light’. This is really amazing when you think about it. God is the God of light, right from the start and in the New Testament. It is his light that has the power to dispel the darkness from man's heart. Darkness cannot abide in the light. Light expels it so that there is none. And this seems to be the way of the Lord

throughout the Old Testament. It is not to say that His love was unknown but not to the extent as it is in the New Testament.

Psalms 33:4-9:

For the word of the Lord is right, And all His work is done in truth. He loves righteousness and justice; The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deep in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

The light of God illuminated the heart of the Psalmist in relation to the fact that God is a living and active God, who speaks and it is done according to His will.

Not only are we told in verse 1 that God speaks, but He has done so at various times, and in various ways. It was not just once, for example at creation, and then He lets us get on with it, or even the odd time, when he just wanted to lay down a yoke upon the neck of His people called the law, but He spoke many times, personally interested in His people's lives.

In the original Greek, the expression "at sundry times" literally means, "by many parts" which means in turn, He spoke and revealed some truths at one time and then revealed more at other times. From Adam in Genesis to Malachi at the end of Old Testament, we see God had a lot to say to some and less to others.

Not only did God speak at "sundry times" but He also spoke in "divers manner". Have you considered how God done this, how He revealed Himself and His Will in times past? Sometimes it was directly and sometimes in-directly. Let's look at a few of the methods.

1. Through Angles - Genesis 19:1.

"Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground."

2. Sometimes it was audibly – 1 Samuel 3:4

"that the Lord called Samuel. And he answered, "Here I am!"

3. In dreams – Genesis 28:12-14

"Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ And behold, the Lord stood above it and said: "I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants."

4. In visions – Daniel 7:15&16

“I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit ¹⁵within my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. ¹⁶I came near to one of those who stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things:

5. By Emblematical actions, for example, Ezekiel 24 when God spoke to Ezekiel through illustration of a cooking pot. Even Hosea, chapter 3 – where his whole life was an illustration of God’s love towards Israel and he had to live it out.

6. In parables – Remember Nathan gave King David a parable in 2 Samuel 12

7. In Poetry – All the Psalms, Songs of Solomon

8. In Proverbs – The whole book of proverbs as well as Ecclesiastes.

9. And in song see Deuteronomy 32 – which was Moses’ song which helped the people to learn a truth.

These are to name just a few of the most obvious ones but others would include signs, animals, miracles and God using people.

In all of this we see the sovereignty of God. He did not act uniformly or confined Himself to any one method of speaking to the fathers, nor at any particular time. None of us can put Him in a box labelled “This is how God does it”. We need to be careful of doing just that, putting God in a box. Remember, God is the same yesterday, today and forever but at the same time He never goes contra to His word. In this day and age, especially in the light of what we examined in the book of Jude, this is very important for us to remember. If it is contra to the word of God, or a brand new revelation, than it is not God and we can be certain of that.

At the end of verse 1 we read that God **spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets.** The writer sets the seal on the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures. The term “the fathers” goes right back in time of God’s dealing with the His people. Luke1:55:

“As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever.”

The Jews prided themselves on the fact that it was God who spoke to them, and to their forefathers, and that he did so through the prophets (forgetting of course that for the most time they did not believe them, and even persecuted and killed them).

They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39)

They considered the revelation exclusive to them only and everyone else were Gentile dogs. In verse 1 were it says, by the prophets, the word "by" should be translated "in" as this is the literally translation from the Greek. This fact denotes that God possessed their hearts, controlled their minds, and ordered their tongues, so that they only spoke His words. 2 Peter 1:21:

"for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

At times the prophets were very much aware of what they were doing 2 Samuel 23:2:

"The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue."

Even in Job 19:25 and Daniel, as we have seen. Remember the consequences of being a false prophet – Deuteronomy 13:5

"But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst."

Little did the Jews know that even today God speaks from His Word and not just to them but to all who believe. If we were to consider the prophets whom God used, and used them He did, they were not perfect, in fact they were sinful - Isaiah 6:5

"So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts."

Putting all the prophets in line, you would see glaring differences in character and ministry. Not one of them claimed to have it all or know it all. In fact in 1 Peter 1:10-12 explains it well, let's turn there –

Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, ¹¹ searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. ¹² To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been

reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.

They were not aware of either the height nor depth of their messages. They were just the faithful messengers like John the Baptist, who was described in John 1:8 as –

“He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.”

This really capsulates the works of all the prophets.

Here at the end of verse 1 and being of verse 2 in Hebrews chapter 1, we see a fork appearing in the road, from the old unto the new.:

“has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;”

“In these last days”, this expression is to be taken as a comparison to “in times past”. Prior to Christ, was the Law and the prophets, but now, the ministry of Christ marked the Period of grace before the time of the end. John 1:17

“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

The Gospel was pressing on the Hebrews the finality of God’s revelation. There will be no other testament or revelation from God then what is in the Bible. God gave predictions and even foreshadowing’s, not just of Christ’s coming but even the end times. As Paul says in Galatians 4:4&5 –

“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

The Lord Jesus Christ is the final spokesman.

The next part of verse 2 declares that it was Spoken unto us... that is to the readers especially to whom it was written. The word of Salvation was first spoken to the Jew and then to all, that is, everyone who has opportunity to read the New Testament or even those who hear the Gospel. A time will come when God will cease to speak in terms of the Gospel and will instead act in final judgment. Verse 2 tells us that God speaks in His Son, who is Jesus Christ, **whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;”**

One thing that got my attention is the way in which the Lord revealed the Divine character of the Saviour by His different titles. It was by a little at a time. It would make a lovely study just to go through the Old Testament and see how many you find.

In His Son, Jesus. Christ is the Son of God eternally, for he is the second person of the Trinity, very God of very God and yet He is also the Son incarnate. When He took upon Himself sinless human nature he never once ceased to be God, nor did He ever empty Himself of His Divine attributes. Had he done so, then He would not have been God manifested in the flesh. But the Scriptures declare this important truth in 1 Timothy 3:16.

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.”

Before His birth God sent an angel to declare to Mary (that the Word made flesh in John 1:1) would be called the Son of God. We believe that the One born in Bethlehem’s manger was and is the same Divine person as had subsisted from all eternity, though He had taken unto Himself another additional nature, the human. Look at John 3:13 –

“No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.”

As well as Romans 5:10

“For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”

Praise God it is in the humanity of Christ that our wonderful Saviour is viewed in this passage. He is our Mediator and God spoke in and through Him as we see when Jesus prayed for us, that is, for every believer in John 17:8

“For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.”

And verse 14:

“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”

When we come to first book, Matthew, in the New Testament, we can see from that the old was passing and a new convent was dawning. It is not just a genealogy to prove the lineage of

Christ but it is the outline to prove His rightful position as the one prophesied in the Old Testament. If we take the time we will find something of tremendous importance historically. We not only see the recorded truth that God did in fact speak through the prophets concerning Jesus but that God's clock was ticking to the event when finally He would send His Son to give the full revelation of Himself and His will. This passing of time and events were all rushing towards Jesus our Immanuel.

Just think of it, what was the announcement from Heaven as soon as Jesus, the Son of God was revealed? Unto you is born.. not a judge or even a teacher...but a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord see Luke 2:11. In this we have the heart of God revealed.

Romans 1:2-4:

“which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

The writer of the Book of Hebrews is clear in the fact that the manifestation of God is now in Christ and it is He alone who reveals the Father's heart. It is not only that Christ was God's messenger but He is in fact the message. If we take the perfect life of Christ, we see God speaking or revealing Himself to us. Take His miracles they reveal His tender compassions as well as displaying His mighty power to us, is not the Lord speaking to us? Take His death, commending to us the love of God, in that while we were yet sinners He died for us, is that not God speaking to us? Take His glorious resurrection, His triumphing over the grave, vanquishing him to had the power of death, coming forth as the first fruits of them that slept, is this not God speaking to us?

In verse 2 it also tell us that He has appointed Jesus heir of all things. His resurrection and ascension into Heaven is the evidence ensuring that we are the fruit of his inheritance.

John 17:24

“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

Colossians 1:11-14

“strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; ¹² giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

When we look at the Old Testament in Genesis 15, God called Abraham out of the country Ur of the Chaldeans and promised him an inheritance, which was the promised land. That night, God assured Abraham this inheritance by making a covenant with him. It was not a contract which Abraham had to sign, and that had terms and conditions, instead, God put Abraham into a deep sleep so that Abraham would not have any part in it, God made it and God would keep it. Under the New Testament covenant, God does the exact same for us. He calls us out of sin and promises us an inheritance of Heaven as well as His peace as we walk with Him every day. God makes the covenant and keeps us.

Colossians 1:19-23

“For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, ²⁰ and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled ²² in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”

At the end of verse 2, it confirms that through Jesus the world, or in some translations, universe, was made. Like the start of verse 1, it ends with the creation, the co-creator, for it was the Trinity that created all things. Just like I said at the beginning, all things begin and end with God.

The Gospels and Epistles go on to show us the striking contrasts between the Old and New, but we also see the unity of both covenants. The contrast is not between light and darkness, good and evil, law and grace. God did not change with the New. He is still the same. Grace of God always abounded. So how are we to explain these covenants? Well, the Old still had the Divine glory of God but as we come to the great and promised event of Jesus, all that was hidden, not secret, becomes clear. As David wrote in Psalms 22 about the Crucified Christ, he

did not as far as we know, understand it in the same way we do. Like Simon many awaited with abated breath for the Saviour the Messiah, the Christ of God. The one and only Redeemer to come. As you know His coming was profoundly herald in Isaiah alone. Look at Isaiah 7:14:

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”

Isaiah 9:6:

For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 11:1

“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.”

Was the prophet understanding it? Perhaps, but his listeners may not have and certainly not the Jews in the time of Jesus. If you look at Isaiah 9:2 :

“The people who walked in darkness. Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined.”

We find part of the Lord’s mission was to illuminate the Jew and the Gentile. Let me give you a few examples, but I won’t be turning to the verses which are all found in Isaiah, you can do that if you like (also there are many more elsewhere, I’m just giving you a taster) -

- To judge - Isaiah 11:3;
- Reprove the Sinner - Isaiah 42:4;
- Liberator – Isaiah 42:7;
- Burden bearer – Isaiah 53:4;
- Suffering Saviour – Isaiah 53:5;
- Sin bearer – Isaiah 53:6; and
- Our Intercessor – Isaiah 53:12.

The nation of Israel awaited, and awaited, than in Matthew 2 we have the long anticipated arrival. Luke in his gospel it full of the realisation see chapter 2:28-40 which is the account of Simeon and Anna. Look we could go on and on, but as a believer we should never grow tired of this subject because it is a blessing from the Lord.

Having given an account of the Jewish revelation, the writer of Hebrews underlines it to the converted Jews, who became Christians. “Yes God spoke to your fathers but now He speaks to you through His Son. You received the truth in parts but now the Son has revealed it, in its completeness”. We see this clearly in the Gospels with a difference, the Jews had multi-formity and obscurity, but we have simplicity and clarity.

Another blessed truth we find here in the opening of this book, is that God does not speak as the God of light and law but through the Son as the God of love and grace. God might have spoken “Almighty-wise” as He did at Sinai which would terrify us and overwhelm us. He could have chosen to speak to us as “Judge” as He will one day speak from the great white throne. That would have condemned us and forever banish us from His presents. But blessed be His name he has spoken to us “Son-wise” in the tenderers relation with which He could possible assume.

Surely this is the emphases which is the character in which God spoke. We can lose so much if we fail to keep in mind the fact that Christ is God manifested in the flesh. We can so easily forget this when reading His word or even pondering His interactions with those in the New Testament that it is God speaking. God’s affections have been made known. Luke 19:10 –

“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost”

These are powerful words because it is God’s heart being revealed over His fallen creatures. Take the words of Matthew 11:28 -

“Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Those words were uttered by Jesus yet they illustrate what is said in Hebrews 1:2.

How different are the two revelations? God in the old as Almighty making know His “light” through the prophets and in these last days making known His love to us who were afar off and yet have been brought near and made sons and daughters and heirs because of His love and mercy and grace. We can only bow in reverence and godly fear but may our hearts be drawn to Him in love and adoration.

Amen.