

Christ the Mediator

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 December 2017

Preacher: Rev Andrew Coghill

[0:00] In 1 Timothy chapter 2 we read in verses 5 and 6, For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

In just over a week's time, much of the world will be celebrating, much of it perhaps, without really knowing why. Some people will pretend that they are celebrating because of the birth of Jesus, but will demonstrate the shallowness of that pretense by failing to give so much as a solitary thought to the infant saviour throughout the entire day.

For them the day will be all about themselves, or perhaps their families, or their children, or their grandchildren, or their dinner. Others will celebrate and indulge during the day, but with a breathtaking hypocrisy, will still be openly contemptuous of the supposed reason for the season, and of the Christ child himself.

A few will religiously disregard the day entirely, and say with some justification, that Christmas was a Romish invention, which had no place in the New Testament church, nor the church's subsequent recovery of biblical purity after the Reformation.

That would be up to a point true. But, we are where we are. And if the world is going to celebrate, and if we are going to be caught up in it, as very likely we shall be, then it is better that we recognize why it matters that Jesus Christ came in the flesh.

[1:57] For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all which is the testimony given at the proper time.

Now these verses in 1 Timothy could be said to sum up the essence of why Christ came to earth. The recognition of Christ as the sole mediator between God and man was understood by our forefathers to be such a cardinal doctrine of Christianity, that when it came to drafting our church's confession of faith, which all ministers and elders and office bearers subscribe, this subject of Christ the mediator was given an entire chapter all to itself.

Despite the fact that the subject of the Godhead and the Trinity had already been dealt with in a previous chapter. The subject, the doctrine of Christ the mediator is a big deal.

It is of the essence of the gospel. It is the reason why Christ's coming to earth matters. It is the reason why it changed the world.

So we read, there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

[3:37] Indeed, there would be little point in having such a mediator if he was not testified to, if there was not a testimony given at the proper time, a testimony by which he was declared and made known.

This is something we need to recognize. God desires to be made known to his people and has given his son Jesus Christ as the mediator for all.

Just pause for a minute. Press the pause button and recognize God desires to be made known.

That is why he has come. And there is something in man, even in sinful, fallen man, that recognizes that a significant portion of humanity, if it is only exposed to the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, will be touched and turned by it.

Why do you think there is such a desire and a demand amongst those who hate the Lord and his gospel to eliminate Bibles from hospitals, from schools, to eradicate any recognition of the Lord's day as a separate day, special, a silent witness for the living Christ?

Why do you think there is such a campaign to eliminate any expression of public Christianity, to expose the followers even of false religions in other countries to the truth of the gospel?

[5 : 13] Why such an attempt by the prince of this world to eradicate even exposure to the gospel? Because the prince of this world knows that God desires to be known by fallen sinners, that they may become his children, that they may hear and know and repent and believe.

And he knows that once that argument, that debate is engaged with, he, the devil, has no chance. So all he can do is stop them hearing it.

Stop them being exposed to it in the first place. But God desires to be made known. He desires to be known by his people.

And this is why he has given his son, Jesus Christ, as the mediator for all. Jesus himself said, He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.

Now if he's a mediator or given for all, does that mean that all are or will be saved? No, of course not. We know from scripture that some, indeed many, perhaps the majority, end up being lost.

[6 : 28] But it is true in the sense that there is just one Savior given to all mankind. He is the only mediator for all.

He is the one mediator for all, given to all mankind. There is not a variety of gods and gurus and prophetic leaders who can save.

There is just one Savior. Whoever and wherever you may be, this Jesus Christ is the only one who can save you.

And those who put their faith in him shall be saved by him. Yes, and saved to the uttermost. And thus we read, if we turn the page into chapter 4, verse 10, for to this end we toil and strive because we have our hope set on the living God who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

It doesn't mean he saves all people. Some will be lost. But he is the only Savior for all people, for all mankind. For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men.

[7 : 44] The man Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. Now Galatians tells us in chapter 3, verse 20, now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.

Or as the old Bible puts it, now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. In other words, there would be no need for any mediator if God's intention was just to keep himself to himself.

God is already enthroned in glory, in power. He doesn't actually need us. He could just sit up there in perfect holiness and leave us to stew in our own fallenness.

He could leave us to our lost eternity. But because he desires to make himself known, there is a need for a mediator, someone to go between God and man.

If it was God's intention just to keep himself to himself, there would need be no mediator. You only need a mediator if you intend to communicate with, to enter into relationship with, those who are by nature outside of you.

[9 : 00] The very fact of a mediator proclaims and underlines God's desire to reach out to fallen mankind and to be in relationship with them.

I know it has been said so many times before, but that's because this genuinely, honestly, is what God is about. And if that is what he desires to be about, how can man ever be naive enough to think that he can somehow please God on his own or dwell in his presence without entering into such a relationship?

How can we ever expect to storm the gates of heaven and say, well, here I am, God, just as I am. This is me. Take it or leave it. God will just say, well, thanks very much. I'll leave it. Off you go to a lost eternity.

God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. He could not even behold with approval the iniquity being born by his son upon the cross. That is why he had to turn his face away.

That is why there was that sense of forsakenness for our Lord upon the cross. How can man ever believe that he has the power to do it by himself when God himself knows the need for a relationship with man if man is ever to be saved?

[10 : 29] How can just trying to do my best or being sincere about the religion I do follow or being spiritual but not really religious which is the cop-out term so often used nowadays, isn't it?

Sometimes we hear of those who want to be able to just enter into God's presence just by being themselves.

Ourselves are fallen. We are sinful creatures. We can never by ourselves merit that holy presence. Sometimes we hear of Christ being referred to by his threefold office of prophet and priest and king.

Now obviously we could multiply scripture or references for each of these attributes of prophet of priest of king and so on but what actually matters more is that we understand what they mean. A prophet by definition speaks from God to man. If you think about it all the prophets all the genuine prophets in the Old Testament for example they spoke from God to man.

[11 : 36] That's what a prophet does. And that is what Jesus as the ultimate prophet is doing. He is speaking from God to man. Delivering God's message in God's words to the ears of men.

A priest by definition intercedes for man to God. And if you think about Aaron and all the Old Testament priests what are they doing?

They are coming into the tabernacle or into the temple with sacrifice with blood with incense and so on. They are coming on behalf of the people and they are approaching whether it be the Ark of the Covenant or the symbolic presence of the living God they are approaching on behalf of the people. They are bringing interceding a sacrifice for man to God. And they must offer sacrifice of some kind to God on behalf of men.

A king of course that's an easier one. A king by definition rules over men having his authority from God. We believe that a sovereign is an anointed sovereign as they are in the Bible.

[12 : 44] It's one reason why our own queen at our coronation is anointed with oil because they are reckoned in monarchy rightly used to be God's representative.

A king by definition rules over men having his authority from God. Now obviously different people have occupied offices such as these down through history but the ultimate prophet the one true priest the one king of kings is Jesus Christ.

And in his one person he embodies all these functions. If he does not speak to us from God then we do not hear God speak.

I'll say that but again if he does not speak to us from God then we do not hear God speak. We can make things up as some of the false prophets did in the Old Testament.

We can call other men our prophets and we can obey them they're only making it up too. People can say oh God's told me to do this or God's telling me to do that I've had a voice God's telling me to do such and such but if it is inconsistent with what Christ has revealed and what Christ has said for example through his word we know that God cannot contradict himself we know that the spirit of God and the word of God cannot contradict one another God is not the author of confusion if Jesus Christ is not speaking to us from God if he does not speak to us from God then we do not hear God speak whatever else we think we are hearing it is not God who is not coming through Jesus Christ all all the Old Testament prophets were speaking from God pointing men to God and ultimately of course pointing them to Christ whether or not they themselves were fully aware of that fact every true prophet pointed people to

[14 : 45] Christ in some way or another you could say that Christ himself is speaking through all the Old Testament prophets you think well come on is that fair comment well that's what Jesus himself says you know if we go back to the famous passage in Luke 24 the road to Emmaus verse 25 and he said to them oh foolish ones and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory and beginning with Moses and all the prophets he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself and again at verse 44 then he said to them these are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures this is what Jesus himself is so

I say again if Christ does not speak to us from God then we do not hear God speak because he will not reveal himself through any other go back to what we are verses that we took there is one God and there is one mediator between God and man the man Christ Jesus likewise if we have not Christ as our priest then we have no access to God it was the priest alone who had access and only the high priest into the holy of holies the real symbolic presence of God on earth in those days but remember at the crucifixion of Jesus at the moment when he expired the veil of the temple was rent and torn torn from the top to the bottom now this was a big heavy curtain really heavy thick embroidered material nobody could just take it like a sheet of paper somebody would have to get up to the top of it they were going to try and cut it with a sword or a blade but nobody did that it just ripped from the top down to the bottom at the moment when

Christ expired the price was paid the access to God's symbolic presence was ripped wide open heaven became accessible because of the price that Jesus paid upon the cross if we have not

Christ as our priest then we have no access to God what do you think they did after the crucifixion of Jesus I imagine that the high priests and the temple priest they pretty quickly got that tabernacle that temple curtain stitched back up again and hung back up again as quickly as they possibly could and they put it back in place but the fact is it had been rent the fact is it had been stitched and patched up the fact was that however much they tried to close it off again access to God was now declared open because of what Christ has done but if we have not Christ as our priest then we have no access to

God again all the priesthoods that men invent are but imitations and imposters the true priests of the Old Testament interceded for the Lord's people and offered up the sacrifices which spoke ultimately of the once and for all sacrifice of Christ we read in the letter to the Hebrews in chapter 8 now the point of what we are saying is this we have such a high priest one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in heaven a minister in the holy places in the true tent that the Lord set up not man for every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer now if he were on earth he would not be a priest at all since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law but as it is Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent better since it is enacted on better promises the one true king is

Jesus Christ just as the one true priest is Jesus Christ if we say that he is not our king then we by definition declare ourselves not to be citizens of his kingdom think about it for a minute if we say Christ is not our king then we are not part of his kingdom we are not part of any kingdom that he rules over we have repudiated his authority instead of being strangers and pilgrims in this world having our true citizenship in heaven with Christ as the king we are declaring this man is not our king we will not have this man to rule over us now we have no king but Caesar only earthly powers do we recognize thus when the word of God comes chapter 11 at verse 15 then the seventh angel blew his trumpet and there were loud voices in heaven saying the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our

[20 : 10] Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign forever and ever the old bible of course is in the plural the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ so it doesn't matter whether we regard this world or whether we recognize all the different countries and kingdoms and powers within it they are all going to be subject to Christ at the last he is going to be king over them all but if we have said he's not our king then it's going to mean that there is not a single spot on this planet that we can say oh well in this part of the world we are free of Christ rule because he's going to be king over it all there's not going to be a place in this world that is not part of the kingdom of Christ there's not going to be so much as a foot breadth of earth where we can put our feet and say here we're not under the rule of Christ because there's not going to be any kingdom left to us on earth that is not his but if we have said that he is not our king upon earth there can be no place for us either in the kingdom of heaven so if there's no place for us in heaven and there's no place for us in earth where does that leave oh dear who will reign over us there

I wonder in order then to be the mediator between God and man Christ Jesus must represent not only prophet priest and king but he must represent both sides of the relationship as God he has been God the son the second person of the trinity from all eternity but he has been man only since the time of his conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary God was always a trinity but manhood if you think about it manhood was not always part of the God head there was a time throughout all history up until the moment of conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary when God was still a trinity but all of the trinity was pure spirit in all three persons then God head was not converted into flesh but rather divine manhood was brought in to the relationship into the equation it was taken in to the God head now you think for a moment of the the honor that that is putting upon humanity a human being became part of the God head which previously had not had any human flesh as part of it at all but manhood was taken in to God Christ being conceived in flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary of her substance yet being conceived by God the Father through God the Holy Ghost Christ Jesus became Holy God and Holy Man how can he be both how can he have both attributes at the same time well okay I am a married man my wife is my wife but long before she was my wife she was somebody's daughter and at the same time as she became somebody's daughter she also became somebody else's granddaughter and before she became my wife she became somebody else's aunt so she was a granddaughter and a daughter and an aunt and then she became my wife and then in due course she became somebody's mother and in the fullness of time perhaps for all we

know might become somebody's grandmother she's also somebody's sister so there's all these different and sister-in-law as well there's all these different relationships she's all of these things but she's still only one person how can one person have all these different attributes and how can these attributes develop just like saying how can you bring manhood into

God surely that's a change in the trinity it is if you like the Godhead being perfected it is becoming all that it was meant to be and you might say that well when she was born she was only a daughter or a granddaughter and then she became a wife then she became a mother person and so likewise it is perfectly possible to have lots of different attributes and still be one person now obviously no human relationship I'm using that as an illustration but no human relationship describes adequately or perfectly the nature of the Godhead Christ is both God and man fully and completely to God he fulfills the perfect sonship that man was unable to offer because of sin and for man he offers up that sonship freely inviting man to enter into that perfect manhood perfect sonship and be part of this new perfected relationship this was no light or easy accomplishment to this he was called by this father from all eternity going back to

Hebrews we read in chapter five first of all at verse one for every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin and then again at verse four so also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest but he was appointed by him who said them you are my son today I have begotten you as he says also in another place you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek in the days of his flesh Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death and he was heard because of his reverence although he was a son he learned obedience through what he suffered and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him we are invited to enter into that perfect salvation to become as it were part of what

[26 : 49] Christ has done part of the bride of Christ through his mediation he willingly undertook this task John's account of the gospel remember we read for this reason the father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again no one takes it from me but I lay it down of my own accord I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again this charge I have received from my father this Jesus does on our behalf the sacrifice upon the cross we might think we can what we almost certainly can never imagine is what it must have been well nigh torture for not just the spiritual separation of the father but I want you to think for a moment about a young boy a child all through his life now we've all been children we all know the temptation to do something naughty or to do something bad if we think we'll get away or to push over the littler child or to do something that is wrong that is sinful

Jesus would have been assaulted with every temptation from his infancy all the way up through his childhood through his youth we all know what most young boys think about some of the time when they get to certain ages Jesus would not have permitted an impure thought in his mind let alone any actual sin think of the life of a boy a youth a man with all the normal inclinations and desires and sometimes perfectly wholesome ones I often think to myself I cannot conceive of the Lord Jesus Christ being in any way desiring anything lustful or impure but I can see the Lord Jesus Christ being tempted perhaps by the wholesome desire for a virtuous wife and children and to be able perhaps to have an ordinary family life and perhaps serve his father and this is so often what the devil puts in our ways he doesn't say oh no it's going to be this or this he will say oh no you can have this and you can have what

God wants you to do Jesus knew that for him following his father's will would have to be single minded devotion Jesus may never have had the least inclination to impurity but I would suggest to you that I'm quite sure the devil in tempting him with that side of things may have presented it in a perfectly pure and wholesome way something which would appeal to him and which he would still have to overcome Jesus would have no interest in that which was dark or sinful or impure but he may well have been tempted by that which was in itself wholesome pure and good but not what his father required of him Jesus was tempted in every way like as we are yet without sin never once guilty of gluttony or malice or disobedience or lust or envy or greed temptation on every side to transgress in even the slightest least most harmless seeming of ways just once to act for self and pride and personal gain never once such a life of utter selflessness perfect obedience perfect love is impossible for us to imagine every day the temptations would be there afresh all it would take all it would take would be one solitary sin such total perfection would only be achievable at the very

highest personal cost never let us think that resisting a lifetime of temptation was easy for Jesus it would have been at the very highest personal cost it almost I hesitate to say it but I do so only in reverence it would almost put the cross in the shade were such a thing possible and I only say that in terms of because a lifetime of temptation the cross might almost have been a relief here it comes at last the end of this warfare and on the cross it is finished not just the sacrifice but all the warfare of temptation resisted overcome triumphed over indeed the cross had itself its fulfillment only because of the perfectly sacrificed life which preceded it the lamb without blemish but the ultimate power of the cross is not the mere six hours if I can say that again with reverence the six hours of physical crucifixion but the spiritual desolation the utter emptying out of self as the father turns away from the sin being put to death there as the lamb of God takes upon himself the sin of the world and takes it away from his own elect children this is the work of the mediator and it is blasphemy indeed to suggest that any other who ever lived could even ever come close and now having risen from the dead and ascended into heaven God the son sits enthroned on the right hand of God the father making intercession by God the holy ghost for all his children here upon earth so before Christ came upon earth who is the mediator then it's still him it's like that trick question we used to get when we were children what was the biggest island in the world before Australia was discovered and the answer was of course it was still Australia it just hadn't been discovered but it was still the biggest island in the world nowadays I think it's more politically correct to say it's Greenland that's the biggest island in the world but never mind it's the same point who was it before Christ was the mediator there was no other media it was still only Christ still the same covenant of grace in the old testament different methods different sacraments and sacrifices and sacrifices and ceremonies but they meant the same thing they pointed to the same mediator it's like two people saying the same thing but in a different language one person saying it in French and others saying it in English or German or Gaelic but they're saying the same thing in a different language do you buy a major purchase item a freezer or a fridge or whatever and you use your credit card who is buying that well you say well I'm buying it I'm using your credit my credit card no you're not actually the credit card company is buying it MasterCard is buying it or Visa is buying it it's their property until you have paid it off and what are you doing you are using their token you are using their token you put it down and you put in your digits or your pen or whatever and the shopkeeper accepts it he's quite happy because he's guaranteed payment why because he's got the token he's got the token he's got the token he's got the token he's got the token he's got the token and it's like that with the old testament sacrifice if we can think of the father's justice the token is presented to him the lamb or the goat or the oxen as he is required and so the payment is guaranteed and it is him that owns the souls of all the elect they haven't paid for it themselves if you're then finally going to pay off your fridge or your big purchase then you'll own it but until then the credit card company owns it but if they were to turn around and say to you see you don't have to make any repayment at all we owned it but we're giving it to you that is what God is doing with our salvation he has paid for it and now he's giving it to us as a free gift so for the sacrifices the tokens issued by God to his children they present them they offer them up and it's accepted and the price will be paid in full for the sins of the Lord's people and what do you want it was set against those tokens and now it is paid in full now it's a gift full and free and blessed and offered to every man and woman and child in this planet and most will not accept it most will not want it or receive it why is that because they don't feel the need of it or they don't believe it can be that simple or they don't believe it can be that free or that there must be a catch there must be a sting in the tail why must there be a sting in the tail because that's human nature we look for that which is corrupted we look for the barb we look for the twist we look for the sting in the tail [36 : 45] because that's the world we look for the world because that's what we look for the world because that's the world we live in that's what we are used to it is a fallen world and that is what we are like that is what I am like and so they assume that must be what God is like but that is not what God is like this is a mediator between God and man offering God as he is in his purity and holiness to man just as he is God doesn't wait for you to be made righteous before he offers himself to you he doesn't wait for you to be holy before he freely offers you the forgiveness of sin being God to man that's what Jesus is and being man to God and offering up to God not just man as he is because that would be fallen and sinful but man as he was meant to have been man as he was at the beginning perfect whole sinless made in God's image for relationship with God you could never do this you could never buy this you could never suffer this nor could I you could never afford this and God knows that so he offers you it free it's not what you and I are like but it's an offer of what

we can be of what he offers us to be and because he wants sinners to be part of this to have access to this to enter into this holy joy he makes it known to them it is part of his work of mediation that he makes himself known to his children he tells them about what he has done and what he wants them to be part of he uses other mouths lesser mouths lesser voices impure souls fellow sinners but still he makes it known that he is the one mediator for there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men the man Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for all which is the testimony given at the proper time friends this is the proper time he is testifying it again here in his word he is telling you now there is one God there is one mediator between God and men the man Christ Jesus this is what he came to earth to do it is why he lived among men in Palestine why he lived among us as a human being in Palestine in Judea it is why he died for us at Jerusalem and yes it is the reason why he was born at Bethlehem let us pray