

God's Greatest Spokesperson

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[0:00] A few years ago, I came across the idea of GOAT on the internet. Now I'm sure when some of you have said that, what comes to mind is this.

But that wasn't the GOAT that was being talked about on the internet. Instead, the discussion was about whether Roger Federer was the GOAT. Some said he wasn't because at the time he couldn't beat Rafa Nadal in Grand Slam finals.

That's since changed, of course. But others said he was because he's won the most Grand Slams ever and on and on. Now, many of you sports fans would know that what I'm really talking about, GOAT, is not the animal, is it?

What does it stand for? Greatest of all time. And so the discussion on the internet was over... Most of you know that, right?

It was over whether Roger was the greatest tennis player of all time, the GOAT of tennis. Now, there's talk of GOAT in other sports, of course, right? So who's the GOAT in basketball?

[1:07] Michael Jordan, yep, okay. Maybe some of you know it. The GOAT in golf? Tiger Woods, maybe. The GOAT in swimming? Michael Phelps, yeah, 23 gold medals.

Now, people like to argue over these things, of course. They do it until the cows come home, take the place of the GOATs. But as we begin our series in Hebrews today, there is one GOAT that's beyond dispute, okay?

And actually, he's actually referred to more often than not as the Lamb in the Bible. But again, I digress. Because the GOAT I'm talking about is Jesus, right?

Jesus is the greatest of all time. And not only that, he's actually the greatest over all things. So if you like, he's two kinds of GOATs, actually, not just one.

But tonight, as we begin our series, we're going to see that he's firstly God's greatest spokesperson. Because that's what the very opening verses of Hebrews say.

[2:07] In chapter 1 and verse 1, so look with me in the Bible. We're going to start there. The writer says, In the past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways.

But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. Now, if you're ever wondering or if you're ever memorizing Bible verses, then this is actually a fantastic couple of verses to remember, aren't there?

Because it packs so much in just a few lines. Once again, we're reminded that God is a speaking God. We know him because he speaks to us.

He hasn't left us to discover who he is or how he thinks. But he's revealed these things to us by his words. Now, because we live in an age of scientific discovery, sometimes we fall into that mistaken notion that the best and only way to learn something is to discover it for ourselves.

So as a society, we honor people who make discoveries, so giving them PhDs or Nobel Prizes, which is all well and good until we then make the mistake of scoffing at the idea of revelation.

[3 : 27] We become too proud to admit, as humans, that there are actually things we need God to reveal to us. Yes, there are things that he's given for us to discover so that we have the joy and the satisfaction of coming to it ourselves.

But then there are also things that are just too important, I would say, which he needs to reveal to us. It's not really that different to parenting, is it? Some things I'd love for my daughters to discover, like the joy of making a yummy dinner for their parents.

So I want them to Google, you know, recipes and experiment with them in the kitchen. Likewise, Emma, I hope you allow me to say this, but Emma has devised a science experiment at school, the aim of which is to discover if frozen milk melts faster than ice or frozen vinegar or juice or tomato sauce.

I think she had eight things. And we did that last night and it was pretty interesting. So you can talk to her about which was what. It was quite surprising, actually. But these are great things for her to discover for herself, right?

And then to let her dad know about it. But on the other hand, when they were young, I would never dream for them to discover the dangers of fire by touching a hot iron or stove.

[4 : 46] And the same goes with morality. Parents should, I feel, reveal to their children what's right and what's wrong, what's good, what's evil. I certainly don't want them to be working it out for themselves through discovery or experiments.

And so it is with God. God has revealed to us the most important things in life, who he is, what we're like as humans, and what his plans for this world is.

And so God has been speaking since the beginning of time. But as it says in verse 1, the only difference is that whereas in the past, God spoke to the forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son.

Now, it's not that his words in the past is no longer true or relevant. It's not as though the Old Testament is inferior to the new. No, those Old Testament words are still God's words and still carry his authority.

But rather, what's changed is God's method of speaking. In the past, it was diffused, that is, via many prophets and across a long period of time. But in these last days, that is, in the days since Jesus' appearing, God has spoken by his Son.

[6 : 08] So instead of many prophets, there is now only one Son. And instead of further ongoing revelation, God's final and ultimate word culminates in the Son.

Jesus is God's final spokesperson. Every other prophet that God spoke to was pointing to him, foreshadowing his coming. But now that he's come, he becomes God's soul voice.

He becomes God's greatest spokesperson. Now, why is this so? Why has God chosen Jesus as his greatest spokesperson? Well, this is the question that the passage turns to next.

And so we go down to the question, why, from verses 3 to 14. The first reason we see is in part A of verse 3. Is that it's because he's the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.

All the other prophets before may have carried God's word, but only the Son's, the true embodiment, the perfect embodiment of God himself. He alone shares in the nature of the Father, in his divine character.

[7 : 22] Only he is of one mind and purpose with the Father. And so just as we know the Son's glory by its powerful rays, you know, we feel its warmth, we see its blazing light by the rays, so also we see God's glory and majesty in the person of Jesus.

When Jesus speaks, we hear God's voice. And when God creates this world, we read in verse 3, it is by the power of his Son's word.

Jesus was the one speaking and is still speaking to sustain all things. No other spokesperson before Jesus can lay claim to any of this.

None of the prophets could. So that's the first reason, because Jesus is the exact representation of the Father. But if that first reason is magnificent, then the second reason in part B of verse 3 is, I think, even more mind-blowing and fascinating.

For what we read is that in addition to being God's spokesperson because of who he is, the Son is also God's greatest spokesperson because of what he's done.

[8 : 43] For he provided purification for sins, it says in verse 3. That is, he provided for humanity to be cleansed of its sin.

And as a result, God affords him the greatest honor of sitting at his right hand in heaven. Now, what this signifies, first of all, is the authority which Jesus now has.

Everything that Jesus does, he does with God's full authority. And his words, in particular, have the stamp of God's or the Father's approval.

In fact, his words are the Father's words. They're one and the same. There's no contradiction. There's no conflict. Now, just on the slide here, many of you, I'm sure, would recognize this person.

His name is Sean Spicer. He's the current White House spokesman. And many of you would know what the job of a spokesman is, right? It's to speak on behalf of the president.

[9 : 41] So when he gets up at the podium and all the press is in front of him, he's the official voice of the White House. And the idea is, what he says reflects the principles, the president's mind.

Now, in past presidency, that sort of worked. The press could trust that whatever the spokesperson said is reflective of the official view of the president.

But things have not been quite so lately with the current president, right? You see, there's been a few occasions where Sean Spicer has said one thing, only for President Trump to then tweet something else differently.

Now, if this sort of thing became consistent, then poor Sean's position really gets very difficult, doesn't it? Because notwithstanding his official job title, Sean would actually have little authority whatsoever.

No one will actually have any confidence that what he says, he's actually speaking for the president. Well, thankfully, that's not the case with Jesus.

[10 : 42] But when Jesus speaks, we can have full confidence that he represents the Father. He does because of what he's done. The Father has seated him at his right hand to rule on his behalf.

Now, the other thing we need to realize too is that when the son now sits at the right hand, he does so as the human son of God as well. He's not simply the divine son, which he's always been, but when he's risen from the dead and provided purification for sins and then ascends to heaven, he now sits also as Jesus Christ, the human being.

He's entered heaven as a human now and he's brought humanity with him to the throne of God. He's brought flesh and blood. Sure, he's still the eternal son, but it's from this point on that he also reigns as a human.

Now, to me, this is actually quite mind-boggling and let me perhaps explain to you a bit further with an analogy. So, compare it with my marriage.

I still remember the day more than 20 years ago when I left my parents' home. I love to pull this up. This is the second time I pulled this up. It just reminds me, it says, ah, those were the days. Anyway, I remember that, you know, those, you know, 20 years ago when I left my parents' house December the 14th, 1996, I left the house as a single man.

[12:16] I was all dressed up, if you can see, with my cravat and three-piece suit, which Elissa made me wear, but anyway. And down to Glen Waverly Uniting I went and I said my I do's with her.

And afterwards when we went, we went down to the city to take some photos and then to the hotel for a reception and then we stayed overnight. But then the next day we returned to our parents' home for the tea ceremony as some of you would know.

First to my in-laws and then to my parents. And when I arrived home to my parents, at one level I was still the same person that stepped out the day before.

I was still Mark with that smile and with that crop of hair. But at another level I was different, wasn't I?

because I was no longer stepping back into my parents' house as a bachelor but as a married man. I was entering their house now as part of one flesh with Elissa.

[13:15] I was, in one sense, changed. And that's exactly what's happened with Jesus as he steps back into heaven. He's now both the eternal son of God which he always was but he's also the human son of man.

And as he rules from the Father's right hand, he does so as a human being. As I said, he brought humanity to the very heart of God's throne room where up to that point only angels were able to come.

But now we see Jesus as a human being seated at the right hand of the Father. And I think that's why we read verse 4 where the writer goes on, so he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

I've always wondered why this comparison with the angels. Well, I think it's because there in heaven there's only Jesus and then there's the angels. And the writer is saying notwithstanding Jesus' humanity, he's actually superior to the angels.

You see, the angels in the Old Testament were God's messengers. They were feared creatures that were sent by God to his people on earth. God's prophets often received God's messages from them.

[14:36] So just think Ezekiel and Daniel. Isaiah, when he had a vision of God's throne in Isaiah 6, what did he see? He saw God's fearsome angels, didn't he?

Doing his bidding. Taking the coal and putting it on the lips of Isaiah. And when we read about God fighting for his people, we often see that it's his angel army that he sends to do that job.

Even in our Old Testament reading tonight, when God led his people from Egypt into the promised land, he sent an angel to guide and to guard them. And these angels carried God's authority with them.

So, I'll put it up again because you probably don't have it in front of you, but notice it says in verse 21, do not rebel or he will not forgive you. That is, the angel, since my name is in him.

They carry the authority or the name of God with them. But now, we read here in Hebrews that Jesus' authority is greater than even the angels.

[15:41] His name is superior to theirs. Why? Because he's not merely God's messenger, he's God's son. And son, not by virtue of his divine nature, but son by virtue of his anointing and enthronement because of what he had done, provided purification for sins.

Which is why, too, we then read quote after quote from the Old Testament about this very thing to show that this Jesus was foreshadowed to have been God's plan all the while.

this Jesus was always going to be greater than the angels. Now, we shall see in future weeks that the people that the writer was writing to in Hebrews was in danger of drifting back to Judaism.

And so, it's almost as if the writer is now saying, look, even the scriptures that you hold so dear that you want to go back into, they point to Jesus. You want to go back into the Old Testament?

Well, the Old Testament actually points to Jesus to tell you not to, to actually go to Jesus. Now, we won't have time to look at all the quotes in detail, but the main message is actually quite clear.

[16:52] These quotes, they're mainly from the Psalms, they attest that from the beginning God planned to anoint a human to be His son, that is to rule at His right hand over all creation.

He's the Messiah, the Davidic king that the people have come to expect from God and who will be their savior. Well, let me read you a few just to give you a flavor. So, verse 5, for to each of the angels did God ever say, you are my son, today I have become your father.

Or again, I will be his father and he will be my son. Then, verse 8, but about the son, he says, your throne, oh God, will last forever and ever.

A scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore, God, your God, and notice, he's just, the psalmist has just referred to the person at the start there as your throne, oh God, and then he says, God, your God.

So, one is God the son, the other one is God the father. Therefore, God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with all the oil of joy. The writer argues that this sort of language is actually only reserved for the human king and never for angels.

[18:04] Which is why we have phrases in verse 5 like, for to which of the angels did God say, Ia, Ia, Ia, and again in verse 13, to which of the angels did God ever say, and so on and so forth.

On the contrary, even the angels are to worship the son. So, verse 6, let all God's angels worship him. And they are to serve him, verse 7, he makes his angels spirits and his servants flames of fire.

So, what the writer is saying is that the Old Testament has always foreshadowed that there will come one, a human king, to which even the angels will serve, to which even the angels were inferior to.

And what really gets to me, I think, is verse 14, because there, the writer ends, are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

Let's think about it. Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? That's mind-blowing, isn't it?

[19:11] Because in Christ, the angels not only serve him, they serve us as well. They serve all those who will inherit Christ's salvation.

Us, mere mortals, God has appointed his powerful angels to serve us, all because of what Jesus has done for us in his humanity.

And so, my friends, in light of this, how are we to respond? How can we apply this word from God? Well, as my outline says under soul, the answer is found in chapter 2, verses 1 to 4.

This is a bit of an aside for those of you who are preachers, trainees, or otherwise. You may have noticed how this very passage is an example of an immortal sermon. It doesn't have quite the three-point structure that we're used to, but can you see what he's done?

So, in verses 1 to 4 of chapter 1, he's given us the big idea, right? Jesus is God's greatest spokesperson. And then, in verses 3 to 4, he backs it up from scripture.

[20 : 22] He shows from God's word what his big idea is. And then finally, in chapter 2, verse 1 to 4, he gives us the application. It's a pretty neat structure, isn't it?

He even has a therefore in the first verse to make it clear. So, verse 1, we must pay the most careful attention therefore to what we have heard so that we will not drift away.

So, friends, if you're here today and you haven't believed in Jesus, then let me just say this plainly to you. You must pay careful attention to the words of Jesus.

Jesus. He's God's appointed spokesperson in these last days. There is no other way by which God reveals himself. So, I'll say this plainly.

Mohammed is not God's spokesperson. Neither is Buddha nor Joseph Smith from the moment. And don't go listening to any of the modern day gurus either because they are not God's spokesperson.

[21 : 25] even if people claim to be prophets from God, they are not. There is only one spokesperson, Jesus. God has spoken to us by his son, period.

And today's passage has shown us clearly why he has done that. He's the only one who not only reveals to us God because of who he is but he has also provided purification for our sins.

He's our savior as well as our spokesperson. So, don't go looking elsewhere anymore. Pay attention to Jesus and believe in him. For there is a great warning, isn't there, for those who ignore his words.

And I think this warning applies not only to those who do not believe in him but also for those who say they do but actually don't listen to his words. So, it's there in verse 2.

For since the message spoken through angels was binding and every violation and disobedience receives its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?

[22 : 40] You remember again that warning in Exodus chapter 23 which we read, how the people will be punished if they disobeyed the angels? Well, if we read Exodus, that unfortunately happened, didn't it?

Because they did disobey the Lord. Even though God had saved them from slavery in Egypt, yet what happened? That first generation never made it into the promised land, did they?

But they perished in the desert. They perished because they did not listen to the words of God or his angels. And so the writer of Hebrews is actually comparing our own Christian journeys as Christians with theirs.

You see, when we believe in Jesus, we sort of leave our slavery to sin, don't we? And we're sort of on route, we're living this life, but we're on route to our eternal rest when Christ comes again.

But the difference is this, our message is actually greater than the angels because we have not heard it from angels, we've heard it from the Son.

[23 : 51] He's the greatest spokesperson and his is the greatest salvation. What Jesus has done is paved the way with his blood for us to flee the coming judgment and enter the throne of God.

That's a greater salvation than just entering the promised land. And Jesus himself announced this while he was on the earth, so that's what verse 4 is now telling us. And it was confirmed to us by his death and resurrection.

There were eyewitnesses that heard and saw and then testified to it, which is why we have the New Testament, because they recorded it for us. And then when the apostles and the evangelists themselves began to proclaim this great salvation, God attested to that truth in verse 4 by signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

All we have to do is read the book of Acts to see the details, can't we? So this is the message which we've now been given. And if the punishment for not listening to the angels was da, then how much more if we now ignore this great message from this greater spokesperson about this greater salvation?

That's the point that the writer to the Hebrews is making. It will be a greater punishment, wouldn't it? And yet for us, we have this temptation, don't we, to drift.

[25 : 25] That's right, we may not reject Jesus outright, but our tendency is to drift, just to drift away. It's like when you're in the ocean at the beach and there you are, bobbing up and down, before you know it, the tide's actually taken you out, hasn't it?

Away from your original point, or it's taking you further downstream or whatever. It's all happened without you even noticing it. You've just drifted, haven't you?

And that happens in life as well. If we lack the intent and the determination, we can just drift, can't we, from year to year, from one stage of life to the next.

And then without even noticing, we find ourselves far from Jesus and His Word. It's not like that we want to, no, but we just allow the currents and the tides of our life to just drag us away.

to maybe it's trying to keep up with competition at work or maybe it's the lure of the social life at university or the distractions of travel or just the busyness of taking on too many things in life.

[26 : 35] But it's very easy, isn't it, just to drift. And it can happen to anyone. But do we hear the warning? To drift is to ignore the great salvation Jesus gives.

And to ignore this is to bring judgment upon ourselves. And I bet you that none of us would ever think in those terms when we just start that process of drifting, would we?

We just think, oh yeah, it's just this, it's just a small thing. But one small thing leads to another. And before we know it, we've drifted. Well, the only way not to drift is to fix our eyes on something that is immovable.

So if you're on the beach, you look at that coconut tree or whatever that can't move and you just keep, I need to stay in line with that tree. Well, in the Christian life, it's not the coconut tree, but it's Jesus.

We need to fix our eyes and our hearts and our lives on his words. He is the greatest and ultimate and final spokesperson. He's the one who has saved us by purification.

[27 : 45] And we need to cling to him, even in the midst of all the pressures of life, even in the midst of all the distractions. So let's pray and ask God to help us do that now.

Father, we thank you for your son Jesus. We thank you and we praise him that he's now seated at your right hand. Thank you that he's provided for our purification, for our sins.

help us Lord, to cling to him, to fix our eyes on him, to keep hearing his words, to pay careful attention to him, so that we might not drift away.

Help us Lord, by the spirit. We pray this in his name. Amen.