

God Has Spoken Perfectly

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[0 : 00] Hebrews 1. Hebrews 1.

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Hebrews 1. You may be seated.

You say, this is the word of God. Amen. Today I want to do stuff just a little differently. I want to set aside some time to frame all of Hebrews for us to kind of help us see this passage as we're going through it.

Jason gave me the opportunity to pick a book to preach through. And after much urging and pleading from my wife and daughter particularly, they said, pick Hebrews. So I want to kind of frame this out for us so that we have that in view as we go through the rest of it.

[2 : 24] Every letter has a purpose, right? When you write a letter, you're writing it for a particular reason. The author's purpose for writing this one is to encourage and exhort those believers facing persecution and the temptation to turn aside from following Christ.

Four times in this letter, he tells them not to draw back from God. Five times he tells them to hold on or hold fast to their faith.

Over and over, he says to strive and make every effort. And twice, he encourages them not to neglect the fellowship of the saints. Two times, he encourages them to persevere in following Christ.

So the message for us in this book that God has preserved for us, knowing that we still need it, is not turning aside or turning away from Christ.

I'm not going to spend long on the background because the author himself does not. In fact, we honestly don't know who wrote it. Origen, one of the early church fathers, says God only knows.

[3 : 32] And I believe that's the position the author would have us to take. We know that he was known to Timothy. And we know that he was known to his audience.

But that is all. I think that he does this on purpose, and we're going to see that. This letter was believed to have been written to Hebrew Christians, most likely those that were in Rome, early in the church.

This was actually probably one of the earliest of the epistles that we have outside of a couple of Pauls. That it was written probably between 1849 and 1870 at the fall of Rome. Or sorry, the fall of Jerusalem and the siege.

Church history says that at this point, a lot of the leaders of the Christians were expelled.

They say it was the Jews under Claudius were actually expelled. But looking back to the church historians, it was actually probably those Jews that had converted to Christianity.

[4 : 33] Because at this time, the Jews had a protection under the Roman law to worship as was their custom. They actually had protections and provisions for that.

But these radical Christians did not. So it was most likely those Christian leaders, the ones that were expelled from Rome.

And now you have this Roman church sitting here without leadership, young in the faith, being faced with the temptation to turn back to Judaism.

See, some of them in this letter say that they'd suffered reproach. They'd suffered affliction. Some had been put into prison. Some had had their property taken. Certainly far worse persecution than we face today.

But that their suffering could all end. If they just went back to Judaism. They could still have their faith in God, which is the important part, right?

[5 : 36] Just leave aside this Christianity. They could have a quiet, comfortable life. Their families could be safe. Things could go well for them. Church, does this sound familiar to us in our day?

Like I said, the divine author knows that we still need this book. Few of us are being tempted with going back to Judaism.

However, we all can say that we are regularly presented with the prospect of turning aside from Christ. Sometimes it's obvious and it's right in our faces.

The area we live in is middle class to obviously very wealthy. All of it's put on display. Worldly gain, vainglory, self-indulgence, materialism constantly around us as much as these Christians in Rome ever had it.

We are being bombarded with thing after thing after thing, seeking to draw away our attention and thereby our hearts to something other than Christ.

[6 : 46] Sometimes it's obvious and loud. Sometimes it's subtle. Just like the old frog in the pot analogy of how you cook a frog. You know, just put him in there and slowly turn the heat up little by little without him perceiving it until he's cooked.

Often times, the church has suffered more under prosperity than it did persecution. Because it's just a little, just slight degrees, as long as it seems normal.

We live in a world that says it's okay to be a Christian. Just don't be a radical one. You can have all your religion, your faith in God.

Just don't talk about sin. Don't talk about repentance. Don't talk about the need of a savior.

Unfortunately, how many of our churches today would preach the message that our author preaches in Hebrews 13, 11?

When he says, For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. So Jesus also suffered outside the camp in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.

[7 : 57] Therefore, let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek a city that is to come. Church, the enemy is only, is fine with our faith.

Just that little turning aside. Just turning aside from Christ, just a little. That's all it takes. There's this old saying that's been used so many times by different leaders, we don't know where it comes from. But the saying goes, do I not make my friends, do I not kill my enemies when I make them my friends? Make no mistake.

There is open warfare going daily over your soul for who will have its allegiance. Our foe is only too happy to have us caught up in the entanglements of this life.

We cannot turn aside and go to anything less than Christ. It's subtle. You say, well, I know I'm a Christian.

[9 : 03] I follow Jesus. But are you spiritually dry and sluggish? I know for myself those days when I sit back and I say, well, where have my thoughts been? Where's my attention been today?

Who has had my heart? Is it myself? Is it the cares of this life? How many of them were occupied with Christ?

There's another old saying that goes, that where our eyes go, so shall our heart. I can't say that I love my wife and give another woman my attention.

Pretty soon, I'll find my heart somewhere else. The author of the Hebrews knows this and makes it plain to us by repeatedly comparing Christ to everything else they were being tempted to go back to.

Seven times in this letter, he calls the work of Christ, or our faith in him, great. Ten times he says that it's better, that it's superior.

[10 : 19] Twice he uses more excellent when comparing Christ. The writer of Hebrews' constant theme is the supremacy of Christ. Not just that he's better than what we're being presented with, but he is the best.

There could be no better. There could be no better. When we see Christ, everything else, just like we sang in our song today, grows strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

Everything else grows sickeningly pale and weak and small. All the comforts of religion and every effort that we make become weak and useless.

And then all the enticements of this world start to become vile. When our gaze is fixed on the one who is glorious like no other, all else loses its value.

That's the theme that I want us to remember as we go through Hebrews. That where our heart is, where our treasure will be.

[11 : 33] It follows a suit. Where our treasure is, what we set before us, our heart's going to be there. Our hearts always follow our eyes.

So setting up that frame for Hebrews and that lens that I want us to start reading through. I want to go into this.

We're actually only going to get through the first verse and a half today. But I read all of Hebrews 1 so that we have a frame to understand it in and a context. But the author lays out three things in particular here that help us to understand his first exhortation in verse 2.

So as we go through this, I want you guys to see this with me. Often, in a letter, the greeting could be made at the end.

But generally, like you see in the other apostles, they lay out who's writing the letter in the beginning. Our author doesn't do that here. Why? There seems like some stuff that you would be expecting to see that seems strangely absent in the first part.

[12 : 52] Remember our theme that I said of holding Christ up. The author doesn't give his name, his authority. But he puts somebody else's there first.

So that we see, who does he hold up first? His first line, he starts with a statement that at first is easy to read right over the top of.

But it is so packed full of meaning that I want us to stop here as we go through Hebrews and see the richness of it. Because it's going to inform the rest of it and help us to understand it.

We have to put ourselves in the frame of the people that were reading this letter to who was written at first. The verse says, There's three contrasts that I want you to see in this verse by itself.

That we're going to look at today. The first one, you'll notice, is long ago. It's the when God spoke.

[14 : 20] Long ago. But the comparison is, but now, in these last days, it's easy for us to hear when and only think time, right?

Especially in our linear Western perspective, we hear when and we think yesterday or the day before. But it also has the connotation, as the King James puts it, I think, better than it is, formerly. In King James, it translates it, in times past. There's a sense of time order. However, the phrase, in these last days, literally reads, on these last of days, there's almost a stop to it.

Because the word used for last, here is the word eschaton. And in Mark's telling of the parable that Jesus gave, that we read in Matthew, this is the word that Mark uses when he says, Finally, he sent his son.

Eschaton. This word we know from extra-biblical sources that by the point of Jesus' day, in Jewish teaching in circles, this word eschaton had taken on a symbolism for the coming Messianic age.

[15 : 51] And that's why I believe Mark uses it, is that he is trying to point out the Messiah Christ. And here, he uses it as well. This one, here, is meant to signify, this word is the last of things in an order.

The culmination of. This would be a finality to it. That's the last of all, the end. It's a resolution of that time order and those things being described.

This last of these days, of the days. What we see here is a finality with this Messianic one that the author is establishing for us.

There's a finality here that God has purposed from the foundation of the world. In Ephesians 1, 7 and 10, he says, In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished on us, and all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Scripture paints a full picture of when this Messiah would come. That's it. We looked back in our Sunday school and we saw all these ways that God spoke to his people.

[17 : 47] And the author is laying out for us here that long ago, in many times, many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last of days, he's spoken by his son.

This would stop them. Here's the Messiah. This is the one. This is the end.

These are the last of the days. Secondly, I want you guys to notice that he says that many times and in many ways, this is how God spoke.

This is the when and now this is the how. As compared to what? By his son. The phrase there, many times and many ways, in its simplest, which means bit by bit or piece by piece.

In lots of ways. The King James here says that sundry times and in sundry ways. During Sunday school, we had looked at how God had used visions of his glory.

[19 : 03] God had spoken to Moses face to face. God had sent visions to his prophets. And always there was signs, there's wonders that accompany.

But we never get a full picture. We see God's holiness. And it's plain that those prophets delivered the message that he had for them.

But we only got bits and pieces. Is what the author is saying here. We didn't get a whole picture of who God is and what he's like. But scripture tells us that even those prophets of old were looking forward to Christ.

When Jesus shows himself to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, he says, And he said to them, O foolish ones and slow of heart, to believe all that the prophets had 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.

[20 : 13] And then, if it couldn't be more clear, in Revelation 19.10, the angel tells John that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

And then, Peter, in 1 Peter 1.10.12, says, It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves, but you.

And the things that you have now been announced to through those who preach the gospel. I'm sorry, preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.

Things into which angels long to look. So I want you to see that simple contrast. Before, it was many times. Many ways.

Bit by bit. Cloudy. Uncertain. We got a glimpse of God. But it was fire and thick smoke.

[21 : 24] We got rumblings and peels of thunder. But then what's the contrast? His son.

One voice. One way. One time. It's the son who says, I am the way, the truth, the life.

No one comes to the Father but by me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. Clear. Unveiled.

Christ before us. The other contrast I want to see in there is by whom God spoke.

Before it was by prophets. Now it's by his son. Today and for the rest of our sermon, I want to unpack a little bit more of the method, the by part.

[22 : 28] And then next time I get to preach, we're going to look at the whom a little deeper. But in his closing to the church in Rome and probably much the same Christians, Paul says, Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages, but has now been disclosed.

So there's, we see this working with the scriptures that we already saw, that all those prophets were looking forward to Christ and pointing forward to Christ.

But there's a full unpacking of the mystery of what God would do in the person and work of Christ. Paul starts to make plain what he means in mystery, in Colossians, when he says, Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that is given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations, but now revealed to his saints.

To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of his mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. And then he clarifies even more when he tells them that his desire for them is that they would reach all the riches of the full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ.

And then in 1 Timothy 2, 5 and 6, Paul says, For there is one mediator between God and man. Remember we looked at the mediation of Moses.

[24 : 15] We saw that. We saw God mediating his word through Isaiah and through Ezekiel. But now he says, The man, Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

So for these Hebrews, this introduction would serve to point them right to Christ. First and foremost, that's where the author heads.

When being presented with all the possibility of turning aside and going back, he stops them with this idea that they would be familiar with, but points it right to the one.

This is it. These are the last of days. Truly, the Messiah is here. These are it.

The Messiah has come. The Messiah has come. That is all. There's no need for further speaking from God. Nothing's lacking. There is no other word.

[25 : 35] Nothing more to look for. Nothing to go back to. Nothing more to add. Christ is the pinnacle of God speaking to his people. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the fullness of the mystery of God.

Everything that had been proclaimed to all of God's people in ages past, this is the end. This is the end. Here's that end mark.

God has spoken by his son. God has spoken. God has spoken. God has spoken. This is the perfect word of God. Finally, he's spoken.

as opposed to times past. Singularly he's spoken as opposed to bit by bit and by his son as opposed to by prophets.

No one who seeks to add anything to what God has spoken can come away and not have to deal with this. Any other voice that claims to be coming from God and speaking a better word is saying that they are speaking a better word spoken by his son.

[26 : 56] By holding up the supremacy of Christ being the final word spoken by God it leaves us in a spot where all else is cut off. What else is there to turn to?

What else is there to turn aside to? If this is the word of God given in his son. In John, Jesus says in John 5.38 he says and you do not have his word abiding in you for you do not believe the one he has sent.

You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life and it is they who bear witness about me. Yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. There's no way we can go and dabble in a Christless religion and walk by this verse and not be confronted with an emptiness to what we'd be playing with.

What worth is there if it's not in the fully spoken word of God? I don't know all of you and where you all stand with the Lord but if you're sitting here and you're waiting for God to speak to you he has. Maybe you're unsure that he exists and you're waiting for him to show you that he's real what he's like he did. Maybe you're not sure who he is and who who he has in relation to you what he's supposed to be.

[28 : 49] You have only to look at Christ. When Philip is there with Jesus at the last supper and he says show us the Father and it's enough for us.

Just show us God and that'd be alright. Jesus says have I been with you so long and you do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

Friend if that's you come now to Christ. He is the final word you are going to get from God. come to Christ simply trusting that this is how God has spoken to man.

We looked at and it was brought out by several in Sunday school how all those ways that God spoke it was God who instituted it. It was God who initiated it.

God is holy and he speaks to people as he will. He started it. you are coming and humbly agreeing with scripture that God has provided that you can know him and it begins with faith in the life death burial resurrection and ascension of Christ.

[30 : 16] He lived the life that God required of you. his death paid the penalty for the sin that keeps you from him and his resurrection gives you the hope that you will see him.

If you will not come humbly to Christ what is there else for you? If you will not your rejection of him is actually rebellion to God because God has spoken to us he chooses he is holy he has sent us his son and beloved of Christ this then puts us to how do we portray Christ to others when we speak of him if we shy away from speaking the gospel and we don't ever bring Christ we actually deny God speaking if this is how he has put in these last of days this final this end cap and spoken by his son while we profess Christ do we put

Christ forth to others I know for myself often times it's easy to talk to co-workers to friends about all sorts of stuff and even try and point them to God's truth but if we don't bring Christ we're not agreeing with God he has spoken he decides are we quick to speak about God's love but never hold up the cross of Christ where God put that on display in the most vivid way possible do we speak to our friends and our family about coming to God for his healing his comfort but never show them his physician do not forget there's no clear fuller picture of who God is and what he is like than in the full person and work of Christ see we have to remember as we go through this that this letter is written to those in the church it's easy to say this to those outside but God knows that we still need this there are so many voices out there calling regularly for our attention but if

God has spoken fully and perfectly in his son what are we listening to what has our ear what's clamoring for our attention are you satisfied with lesser things maybe your love has grown cold where are you looking maybe even in those subtle sneaky crafty ways of our enemy you know a lot about the Bible you love listening to doctrine but has it driven you closer to Christ of late do you see him more clearly don't forget its aim may it cause you to see him we are regularly put forward with things to turn us aside from following

Christ go to God's word sit at the foot of Christ and listen to him I wanted to read for you the words of Christ for this reason he says truly truly I say to you the son can do nothing of his own accord but only what he sees the father doing for whatever the father does that the son does likewise for the father loves the son and shows him all that he himself is doing and greater works than these will he show him so that you may marvel for as the father raises the dead and gives them life so also the son gives life to whom he will brothers and sisters there is nothing left to turn aside to that as we go through

[35 : 31] Hebrews and we get to study this letter to Christians that are really much the same politics that we are when we come to the word there's really two responses that we have is to be cut with conviction when God shows us our need of him and those things that have turned us aside from seeing the supremacy of Christ and the other side of that coin is to see him and rejoice so my prayer as we go through Hebrews together is that he would hold up Christ before our eyes God that he would be glorious to us that everything else would become pale my prayers that God would work in each of us a measure of both may he turn our eyes fixed to

Christ let me pray for us! Heavenly Father Lord you are so good that you the holy would step down and speak to men that the word would take on flesh and dwell among us that you would show your people the full picture of you and the glorious face of Christ Lord I pray for all of us here today for those that do not know you yet that you would create in them a hunger to where they can turn nowhere else but only find their satisfaction in you Lord I pray for your church that you would preserve us by your word that this word from you

Christ on full display would be to us sweeter than honey that we could not turn aside to anything else that you would capture Lord the thoughts and the affections of our hearts oh Christ there is none like you Holy Spirit I pray that you help us to do this it is in your son's name Lord that I pray all of this amen