

God's Perfect Messenger

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- [0:00] Hebrews 1.
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 This is the Word of God.
 Amen. Go ahead and be seated and we'll pray and get into the Scripture. Heavenly Father, Lord, we come before your Word.
- [1:58] Father, desperate, weak people, requiring from you strength, requiring from you wisdom and understanding.
 Lord, it is futile if I speak, if you do not speak to your people through your Word.
 So, Father, please send your Spirit. Speak to the hearts of those around. Speak to our hearts. Speak through me, Father, your Word to your people. Lord, would you gather us in?
 Father, those that are here, would you draw us close to you? Lord, maybe any of those passing by that are yours that you are still calling. Father, would you draw them in?
 Would you give them ears to hear your Word this morning? Lord, we know your Word says that it does not go from you and return empty, but does that which you have sent it to accomplish.
- [3:02] So, Lord, send your Word this morning to speak to your people. Father, we depend upon you. I pray all of this, Lord, that your Son may be lifted up and glorified, that we would see Him and rejoice this morning.
 It is in His name I ask. Amen. So, we left off months ago after our summer break through Hebrews, seeing that the author was saying that before, long ago, many times, many ways God had spoken to the fathers by the prophets, but now He's spoken by His Son.
 And we looked at that perfect final message of God in His Son. But it kind of leaves us with some questions as to what qualifies Jesus to be the perfect messenger from God?
 What qualities, what qualifies His gospel to be the last and best words spoken to us by God? The author has a challenge for us and a warning set up in chapter 2.
 But he starts with putting Christ on display. Who is He? Perfectly in chapter 1 that we might understand the warning.
- [4:28] So, what makes Jesus special and different from the word that was spoken by the prophets to the fathers of Israel before?
 What makes Him different? What makes Him special? What grounds does He have to be the perfect word spoken by God? What right does the author of Hebrews have to make that claim?
 So, the answer He's going to give us is holding up Jesus' divinity and His authority. We're going to call His divine authority. This week, we're going to look at His divinity.

Next time, we'll pick apart the authority part. But He can speak to us from God like no other can because He is God.

He is the Son of God. He possesses the very same nature as God the Father, and He rules all things with the same authority as God the Father.

[5 : 38] We're going to look at how this is done in two parts. So, we're going to deal with the divinity part. And I actually want to start with a bit of a word of caution.

There's a lot of doctrine in here. It's called Christology. Who is Christ? What does Scripture say about the person and work of the Son of God?

And there's a lot there that we're going to cover. It's very important. It could be a sermon series all its own just right here in the beginning of Hebrews 1. Doctrine is vastly important.

Right sound doctrine that lines up with Scripture is incredibly important. But if it's information only, if it's something we're familiar with, we go, yeah, yeah, yeah, I'm passing on.

I got that. And it doesn't change our heart and our actions. It does us no good. Very little. We'll have a good understanding, but it doesn't change our life.

[6 : 40] We can have all the right understanding of who Christ is and actually be no better off than the demons. So, why does he say that?

Well, in James 2.19, he says, You believe that God is one, you do well. Even the demons believe and shudder. And when Jesus came to the man among the tomb there in Matthew, the demons cried out, What have you to do with us, O Son of God?

Have you come to torment us before the time? So, you see, that even the devils have a better Christology than a lot of Christians. They understand who the person is of Christ.

And to them, it's just a reminder of a death sentence. We treat Christ very casually in our world and in our culture. They've actually got a little bit of a leg up on most of modern American culture.

So, what I want today is I'm actually going to start a little backwards. Usually we go exegesis and then application. What does the scripture say? How does that apply to us? I want to start with some questions of application. Because if the doctrine that we look at doesn't change us, then we're missing the point of Hebrews.

[7 : 58] We're missing the point of scripture. So, if we look back at our context, remember this letter was written to a people facing persecution and pressure from two sides.

On the one side, they had the world and the Roman culture around them completely rejecting them as some sort of cult. The Jews were protected because there was an ancient religion.

But this Christianity was seen as an offshoot. And actually, many of the Christians at the time had their possessions taken, their livelihoods destroyed, some were put into prison, and those that were left were relegated to the filthiest, poorest quarters of Rome.

This is actually where when Rome burned, it burned the hottest because they were cramped, they were filthy. They were subjected to that because of their faith. We actually see those conditions being represented here at the end of Hebrews when he talks to these Christians.

But also, they had the persecution of the religious groups, of their own brothers in many cases in the Hebrews and in the Jews, saying, because you follow Christ, you're a heretic.

[9 : 17] You're blaspheming God. You have no place here. So the pressure for them was to just turn back to the old covenant ways.

They could go back to being protected, being provided for, being cared for. Their families would be fine. Everything would be easy. Just quit making a big deal about Jesus.

You can have all your religion just stop talking about Jesus. Stop following him. That's it. That's it. We may not face the same pressures in the same way in our everyday lives, but make no mistake, we have the same enemy, and what he cannot do by outright force, he will do by subtle craft.

We see that in our culture today. There are some that push and fight against Christ and would have him thrown down. But far more often we see in our culture, just fine, have your nice church, do all the right things.

That's okay. I'm just not big on Jesus. Don't talk about him. Or Jesus is fine, as long as he's a good teacher, a nice role model, a religious guy.

[10:41] He talks about love and God loves me and all the plans and purpose he has for my life, and we're good with that. But I want to ask you, brothers and sisters, what clamors for your attention every day?

How many are distractions and diversions? How many ways in our daily life are we surrounded by Christlessness? Unfortunately, it's all too easy to get used to.

How many of our thoughts this week have been taken up with Christ? Or are they concerned with the world around us? Everything that we see in front of us, everything in your feed?

In war, if you can't defeat an enemy outright in battle, there are other ways to go about doing it. You cut off his supply so that he can receive no reinforcements, no refreshments.

You distract him with little side skirmishes and small battles until his strength and weapons are spent. You harass and wear him down until he has no more morale.

[11:59] Eventually, he will fall and you will be his master. This letter is a warning to the church and a call against apostasy.

Make no mistake, whether it be quickly or slowly, our enemy does not care so long as he can devour you. Maybe you're here and you're like, Jonathan, I get it, but I don't know why you're talking about it.

I'm not worried about it. You've supported yourself really well with all those gospel assurances that know exactly what Christ has done for you and that's good.

I praise God for that, but we're not to take the assurances that scripture affords us and ignore the warnings. If you are sitting here and you are hearing God's word just the same as these Hebrews were, you are in danger.

You are on the combat front. We need to hear God's word. We need to have Christ held up so that we do not grow weary, we do not lose heart, we do not get distracted, and we do not turn aside from Christ.

[13:19] So, I want to preface everything that I've said with that and then I want to start digging through the scripture and I pray that God uses that to start seeing what the author has for us here in Hebrews and applying it.

I want, because you're going to have a couple of reactions. Either you don't know the Lord and all of this is going to be completely new and what I want for you to see is Christ.

Maybe somebody walking by, maybe somebody hearing this, I want you to see Christ.

If you're casual with church and this is maybe like your first time, maybe you're not actually, you're a Christian occasionally, let's say.

Maybe not you're a Christian on a continual faithful basis getting up. Your first thought is just, let me come to Christ. What do I have?

I have nothing. Let me come to Christ. I can't wait to be with him. I can't wait to be with his people. I want you to see Christ. Maybe you're like, yes, Jonathan, I know all of this.

[14:28] I praise God. I tremble daily, but it is his grace that upholds me. I want you to see Christ because ultimately what this should be when we see Christ, it should refresh us, it should equip us, it should strengthen us, and it should cause us to praise him.

So I'm actually going to kind of just let this end with doxology is what I would pray for us today. So, how does the author start this?

How does he address this turning away that he's trying to warn the church with? I want you guys to see this in his scripture, not from my words. He says, long ago, many times, in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days, he's spoken to us by his son.

Now, that's where we left off last time because he puts this huge contrast right there. In many times, many ways, he spoke by the prophets, but now he's spoken completely differently.

So, whereas God had spoken before through prophets like the people, with all the infirmities and shortcomings of the people, now he has spoken by his son.

[15:52] This is how the incredible God who no mere creature could ever fathom has chosen to reveal himself to his people, to show himself to his creation in the son.

So, verse 5 brings us out even a little further in contrast to the angels. He says, for to which of the angels, remember, when God spoke to the prophets, the angel of the Lord spoke to the prophet.

Right? We see, actually, in Exodus, when Moses is up on the mountain, the angels were ministering to him. But in contrast, he says, for which of the angels did God ever say, you are my son.

Today I have begotten you. So, there's a superiority to the messenger because he is not like the angels. He's not man. He's not created being.

Isn't it? He's God. He is the son. He's higher than both. He's not the fathers. He's not the prophets. And he's not even the ministering party of the angels.

[17:05] He makes the previous messengers very inferior by contrast because none of them share the same nature. He says, I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son.

There's so much that we have right here that we can be amazed and wonder at. That God himself would come down and speak.

They would take on flesh. He says, today I've begotten you. Now, that messes with our mind.

We're going to actually address a little bit of that here in a little bit. how can God say who exists outside of space and time, today I've begotten you.

For God, everything is today. He doesn't exist in space and time. This is how God chose to reveal himself in his word as being the eternally begotten, the always proceeding from the Father.

[18:11] John tells us in John 1.14, and the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only begotten Son from the Father. This is how God spoke to us.

By his Son. Not mixed, not corrupted as we saw in our confession. All the essential properties of man he took on yet without sin.

That he was God of very God. So then the second glory of Christ I want you to see is that in his divinity it is his very nature.

We're going to take a little bit deeper look. This is in verse 3. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature. So he uses a word and it's not reflection.

It's not that he's a picture of God. Right? Because a reflection like the moon reflects light that's not its own. It has a different source.

[19:18] But the word radiance is the brightness. It's the outshining. It's the communication. Right? The sun the light that we see from it is a communication of its very self-same light.

It's the same property. That's the picture that we get here. It's that he's the radiance of the glory of God. And to the Jewish mind and to these people they would understand man all the pictures of God's glory that were painted in the Old Testament.

Think of like when Moses is up on the mountain and he says Lord that I could God I would like to see you and he says I will not let you see my face but he hides him in the cleft of the mountain puts his hand over him and lets him see his back as he passes and then Moses comes down and what he has to veil his face because the people can't stand to look at him because he is reflecting back the glory of God.

What sort of picture do we have here in the superiority of Christ? He is not reflecting back the glory of God he is the radiance of the glory of God he is the outpouring of the glory of God he's not just a shadow cast over the face of Moses but he is the very picture of God he says the exact imprint of his nature this word is actually character and this is the word that we get character from and it actually comes from the idea of an engraving or an inscription this is where they would take a block of wood or a stone and they would chisel an exact image in it and it would be the word that would be used of a king's signet ring they would take the hot wax upon whatever official seal or declaration and he'd pour it on and then he'd take his ring and stamp it in there and that would be his likeness engraved his character upon that seal and it would bear all of the it was as if the king were going and giving it to you himself it was still sealed with his words it bore his impression this was the exact imprint!

but we're told it's not the exact imprint of what God has spoken but he's the exact imprint of his nature when we see Christ we see that fine detail of God standing back up at us it is that imprint of God it is that we see him we see God in stark relief that word uses a slightly different variation but they actually both had similar origins in Colossians 1:15 when Paul says that he is the image of the invisible God the firstborn of all creation and in verse 19 he tells us for in him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell he has all the properties of God he is very God of very God in him is the fullness of deity so how could we ever look for a better word from God than Christ himself very God of very

[22:36] God what I want you to also see though is it kind of if we take it only there we are left with a little bit of room for error that somehow we see Jesus as the only begotten of God fully possessing and communicating the nature of God to us but these original audience would be hearing the same thing is Jesus the same God or did God change did God become something new and different and did Jesus have a beginning or is God doing something new and inconsistent now these are things that we have to wrestle with so we make sure Christology is right but also there's real implications of this that we see every day I mean how many of you have heard well the God of the

Old Testament and the God of the New Testament seem very very different how are they the same because over here he looks like this over here he looks like this or how can God be two people and one God how is Jesus God like I'll give you that he's a good teacher and he's this and that but how is he God so the third glory I want you to see of Christ is he is the divine creator and sustainer of all things in verse two he says but in these last days he has spoken to us by his son whom he appointed the heir of all things through whom also he created the world in verse three then he adds after he says he is the radiance of the glory of God in the exact imprint of his nature he says he upholds the universe by the word of his power so the author is ascribing!

that he is the divine agent of creation and he is the sustainer and the upholder of it by his power by the word of his power the verses that he quotes out of the Psalms starting in verse eight he says his is throne is the scepter of your kingdom you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness therefore God your God has appointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions and you Lord laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning and the heavens are the work of your hands they will perish but you remain they will wear out like a garment like a robe you will roll them up like a garment they will be changed but you are the same and your years will never end so the author says these that were spoken in the psalms are actually about the son so remember we have one divine author over scripture what he spoke to the people before was about

Christ for he says but of the son he says your throne oh God is forever and ever if he's talking about David and David in his rule in his reign as God's anointed king how can he say therefore God your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions because David's line was broken it didn't sit on the throne was carried off into captivity David passed away Solomon passed away his sons all passed away so his throne wasn't forever and ever but of the son who we read in our confession came of the line of David says his throne is forever and ever therefore God your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness so this son is forever and ever because then he says also in that context of the son he says and you

Lord laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning and the heavens are the work of your hands remember through him also he created the world so we see that Christ was at work with God the father in creation he's not something new he was in the beginning also he says like a robe you will roll them up like a garment they will be changed but you are the same and your years will have no end in Colossians he says he is the image of the invisible God the firstborn of all creation for by him all things were created in heaven and on earth visible and invisible whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities all things were created through him and for him and he is before all things and in him all things hold together he is the head of the body the church he is the beginning the firstborn from the dead that in everything he might be preeminent and

[28 : 21] John 1 he says in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God that he was in the beginning with God and all things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made so we see Christ he created and he sustains it he is unchanging he possesses that same quality of God and is unchanging perfect God ness but I want you to see another way that the author ties this in so if we go back to verse one where he says long ago at many times in many ways God spoke to our fathers by the prophets but in these last days he has spoken to us by his son if you look there in verse two where it says through whom also he created the world that word world is actually the

Greek eons it means time ages a set period but when you put it in the! it it's a way of saying everything that we see all the created order of things it's the world that's why we translate it right there but I believe he's got a double meaning in there when he says ages and we see that right immediately following verse one that in long ago many times in many ways God spoke to our fathers by the prophets we're meant to draw a connection that in the same way this one was the maker of the ages all those long ago times when God was speaking to their fathers by the prophets and he laid down the old testament that we have before us it was the very same son of

God speaking with the father in first Peter verses 10 through 11 he says concerning this salvation the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be!

yours! So this very self-same brightness of the glory of God and exact imprint of his nature is the same one who has been speaking with God to his people for all the ages it's not something new it's not something different God didn't become something else but as our confession says that he took on the human nature it's an incredible mystery and I actually want to err more on the side of not trying to explain it why because it's good that we don't understand God all the way he's God and we're not and we need to marvel at him it's so easy

I feel like in this world to try and we want an explanation for everything we want to explain why the events of the week are the way they are we want to explain why everything is what we see but we have to have an understanding that Christ is not like us in some ways because if he was just completely like us no no deity to him yes he is fully man and able to bear with us in our infirmities and to know them but honestly that would be a pretty hopeless situation if we had only a savior that was completely like us and not very god of very god not over transcendent above creator sustainer of all that there is because that is what takes our eyes off of here off of the now and puts them on the glory of

[32:57] Christ so with that I wanted to give you what our forefathers said and the Athanasian Creed is very helpful for you it says although he is god and human yet Christ is not two but one he is one however not by his divinity being turned into flesh but by God's taking humanity to himself he is one certainly not by the blending of his essence but by the unity of his person for just as one human is both rational soul and flesh so too the one Christ is both God and human so maybe if you're hearing my voice walking by maybe if you're sitting here and you do not know Christ yet and you wonder what

God is like how you can know him you only have to look at Christ maybe you've heard other people claiming to speak the word of God or speak from God and there's a lot of voices out there trying to tell you what God is like how you can know him but today I want you to hear his word there is one that speaks perfectly on God's behalf there's no place you were going to go where!

you could see more clearly who God is than Christ you wish that God would speak to you that you could hear from him and you would just know what he was like here he is he is held up in the person and work of Jesus Christ he is the last and best word spoken by God look at Christ read his words hear now his good news that he has for you he has made a way that you should know God the problem is actually your sin it's rebellion against God and actually refusing to look at Christ and to go on in protest of him asking for

God to speak is for the rebellion he has spoken he's made him plain the problem is that your sin and rebellion has made you an enemy of God and you today need to hear his voice today he is calling you he has provided a payment for that sin he has made a way that you might know him and it is in the sending of his son Jesus Christ God taking on flesh for you that he might take on and become sin for you and die in your place he will cover over the sin the rebellion and the disobedience with his perfect obedience on our behalf that is what we recite to each other every Sunday in our assurance of pardon that he made him who knew no sin to be sin for us so today if you do not yet know

Christ you have not bend the knee to Christ I tell you today you will get no better word from God he is God made flesh communicated to us he has come that he might suffer and die in your place and be raised again that you might have life and the knowledge of God so today repent and believe in him there is no one else brother and sister if you are here hearing it and you are feeling the discouragement of the world the cares the clamor of everything else if Christ has been a cold notion to you this week hear the word of

[37:33] God he has come he has come for you to communicate the very person of God to you what worth are you giving other things what place are you giving them make no mistake our enemy will seek to wear down to distract to grow cold to turn us indifferent our author right here is giving us God's remedy that is the person and work of Christ held up before our eyes that we might see him that we might rejoice in him that we might take joy and comfort and strength from who he is and what he has done so here today glorify Christ give him your full attention he will be to you refreshment and strength he will be to you an encouragement may he keep our eyes fixed on him amen