

And God Spoke!

Overview

So I'm looking this morning, as I have done for a few days now, at Hebrews chapter 1, and it's before you on the screen. I'd like you to read it out loud with me together. It's the old King James Version.

That's the one I learned on. When somebody quotes the Bible, if they quote it in the King James, I recognize it and say, he's quoting the word. But if they quote some of these new wonderful translations, I don't know if that's something out of a pickled brain.

I'm voting for the King James because I know it. You don't have to vote that way. But this is in the King James.

I'd like you to read it with me together, shall we, out loud. God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds. Now, I do read other translations.

I read a lot of translations. So here's another one called the ESV, the Standard Version. Long ago at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

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. I want to break this down. I want to break this verse down and share with you some thoughts.

Breaking this verse down. So, long ago in the past. It happened at various times.

It wasn't like a daily thing. It wasn't like, oh, it's the first of September, he always speaks to us on the third. No.

It happened at various times. You never knew when God was going to speak. How did he speak? Well, according to this verse, he chose various ways to speak.

He chose different people. He sometimes chose to do so in a creative way. The fire out in the wilderness.

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Every day when the people saw the fire coming up at night, they said, he's with us. Oh, I'm with you always, Jesus said. Through that fire, he was speaking to them.

Through that fire, he was saying, I've made a covenant with Abraham. You're his children. I'm here for you.

Sent quail, fed them. My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory. God spoke in various ways.

He spoke through prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah. Those guys preached for a long time. Interesting, Isaiah has the most verses to record his prophecies.

But Jeremiah with lesser chapters spoke longer. Then there was one fellow, his ministry as a prophet, God speaking to him, it lasted 30 days. But they never collided with each other.

It was a consistent message. And I want to bring this out to you. That the message was to the fathers at the time.

Interesting, there was this particular event when the Lord said to Moses, Have the men stand at the door of their tents. Because the Lord was going to speak through Moses to the men of the day. Who would then in turn see to the fact that the word spoken would be carried out.

The fathers were given a responsibility. So these were fathers of individual families, of individual tents. But when it says he spoke to the fathers, that's not what that's speaking of.

He spoke to the fathers, talking about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses, Joshua, he spoke to the men who were regarded as our fathers from the past. God didn't speak to us directly.

He spoke in a variety of ways at different times to the fathers. And then we had to rely upon the Abrahams, the Isaacs, the Jacobs, and so on. To continue that word to be imparted to us.

And he did so, God did so, by the prophets. So God spoke to the prophets, the prophets spoke to us. So we were getting it second hand.

In these last days, in these last days, the Lord has spoken to us. Not to the fathers, now God's speaking to us. And not through prophets, he's speaking to us directly through his son.

The book of Hebrews is a book of contrasts. I've already mentioned to you that the people that this was written to, and they weren't all written to people in one town. They were all over the place.

People who read this, this message was to the people in Jerusalem. This message was to the people in the Mesopotamian. Everywhere, wherever they had gone, this message was to them.

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Because people were, these people that he's writing to, if you study it and you dig deep, it becomes very apparent. These are not new Christians. These in fact are probably second generation.

The people that are receiving this message, their parents, their parents were the ones. Or maybe their parents weren't saved through it, but they were the second generation of Christians in their community. In other words, people got saved, then they pass along to others, and these people, we're not the first generation to be in this congregation.

This congregation's been on the go for 118 years, so we're several generations down the road. This was not a new group of Christians, but watch this. They were getting weary, and they were becoming disappointed, and they were threatening to go back to Judaism.

They were threatening to go back to the temple worship, of taking turtle doves and cutting the throats of lambs and goats. They were thinking about going back to keeping the law. Every time they find a dime on the pavement, they take it, rush it to the candy store, break it into 10 pennies, and drop the 10 percent.

No, you say, Pastor, that's talking crazy. It wasn't dimes, but they lived like that. Everything that came in their hand, they'd rush it, and they'd give 10 percent of it, because they were trying to keep the law from the Old Testament.

So these people were getting disappointed, and they're becoming discouraged, and they're thinking about going back, and they were serious about it. It was easier for us. It was like the children of Israel who were released from Egypt.

When they got out in the wilderness, they said, I'm getting sick of manna. Can we have something else? They said, I'd rather be sitting around the flesh pots in Egypt. It was good then.

This is difficult for us. And they would have gladly had Moses take them back. But Moses did not take them back.

And he drove them on forward and said, God gave us a promise. Let's keep on moving on. Thank God for men like Moses who were tenacious and did not give up.

So here's the book of Hebrews, and we don't know who the writer was. That's of no great consequence to us. A whole list of people have been suggested to be.

And I'm not worried about it. It doesn't matter who wrote it. But this person was contrasting what you Christians have got now and what you're talking about going back to.

Are you serious? You're really going to go back? Well, yeah, we had Moses. Our great-great-great grandparents had Moses. And angels came and visited.

It was an angelic being. It turned out to be actually a theophany, which was Jesus who appeared. It was Jesus who wrestled with Jacob that night.

No man has ever seen God and lived. You know that one? How could Jacob wrestle with God and not see his face? He was wrestling with a theophany. He was wrestling with Jesus.

Jesus in person. So these people were saying, we had angelic visitors. We had this.

We had that. We had Melchizedek, a priest who showed up out of the middle of nowhere and Abraham gave him tithes at the time. We had all of that.

So this book is a book of contrasts between Moses and Jesus. Jesus is greater than Moses. Moses delivered you from Egypt.

Jesus delivered you from your sin. This is Jesus is a greater one. He compares through the entire book, compares Jesus to everything that they were thinking about going back to.

He said, Jesus is a better priest than all the biblical priesthood. Those priests died and had to be replaced. He said, Jesus is the beginning and the end.

He is the high priest. He compares the sacrifice, dead cows, dead goats, pigeons. They all died to cover this sin.

That's what the blood did in the Old Testament. The concept was that the blood that was spilt of animals did not take away your sin. It covered it.

It was like a band-aid. That when God looked at you, remember, on the night of the Passover, when I see the blood, you're covered. When I see the blood, I will pass over you.

When they got out to the tabernacle ministry, animals were slain and their blood was applied to the situation. So that when God looked at the souls of Israel, he saw the blood and it passed over. But now Jesus does not cover your sin.

Jesus removes your sin. This is a better sacrifice by a better priest. You remember the stories about the tabernacle? Do you know the tabernacle that Jesus, the high priest, ministered in? It's a tabernacle not made with hands.

It's in the heavens. So here we have the writer to the Hebrew believers who were Christians, second generation Christians, who are getting discouraged. It's costing them a great deal.

There are Persian Christians, Iranian Christians, who are dying for their faith in the street. You say, how can you put all that together? They know that Islam, I got to be careful what I say here, I could be fined \$750,000 for finishing the sentence that just about came out my mouth. Do you realize that? I could be fined for saying what I was about to say.

Careful, David, what you say. They're listening. They got language police on the go now.

Welcome to Canada. I probably can't say that. They're going to get us.

They're going to get you for eating peanut butter. Whatever they say is moral. Stop it, David.

It's hate speech. Of course it is. I hate everything.

I hate this pulpit. I hate this cup. Oh, okay.

I told you they were near. What have I done wrong? Oh my. What have I done, Matt? He says, I don't know.

Where was I? Oh my, I'm a mess. See, I started messing around with those. People in Iran do not want to live under the regime who are running the country according to the Koran.

When they're in the streets, they're saying, we want to follow Jesus. Did you know that? Those hundreds of thousands of people. There's a revival going on.

People are getting saved. People are getting saved. Like, huge, huge.

And they're dying in the streets, being mowed down by machine guns for their faith. They're not turning back. God bless them.

These people were threatening to turn back because it would be easier if we gave up the cross. It would be easier if we gave up Jesus. We're willing to give up Jesus because then we won't be persecuted anymore.

And so the writer to the Hebrew people is saying, God spoke to you in the time past. This is the opening chapter of Hebrews. He starts off with, God in the past spoke through men, the fathers like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

He spoke through them. But in these last days, he's speaking to you. He's speaking directly to you.

In the Old Testament, he used men like Jeremiah and Isaiah. But today, he doesn't rely on them. He speaks to you.

He speaks to your heart. God's speaking is essential to our faith. And it's essential that we continue to hear him.

There's a promise in the Old Testament. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, you'll hear a voice behind you saying, This is the way. Walk this way.

It's important that we stay tuned. It's important that your radio frequency stays tuned so that you can hear from the Lord. Because when God speaks, it's like a thunderclap, it's a glorious thing.

And so many of us have experienced different dimensions of God speaking to us. Surely everyone here could give us a minimal testimony. Some of you could give a huge testimony.

The day that you know that you know that you know. You knew in your knower, God was speaking to your heart. I won't ask for a raising of hands.

I think every hand in the house should go up. God spoke to me when I was a little wee cricket in a church town. In the town of Hagerville, I was sitting in the front row with my friend Wayne.

And when the pastor came to the end of his salvation message, head bowed, eyes closed. Is Jesus speaking to someone? And I heard these words. I see that hand.

It was my hand. God was speaking. I was weeping.

I was touched. He closed the service and he took me. It was a smaller church building than this one.

And he took me through a door right here. And that was his little study. I could rehearse for you right now the prayer that he led me in that room.

When I came out, my little grandma is sitting there. She was probably in her 65th year. When I came out, I got a wonderful grandma hug.

Because she'd been praying for little David. How did I know she'd been praying for little David? Because when I would go and visit her in the summer times, I was always given the same bedroom on the second floor. That house was heated by firewood.

So there were no heat vents. No piping. So there were cuts in the floor.

You know this story. Cuts in the floor and a steel grate. The heat would find its way from the kitchen, from a stove there.

And in the living room, there was another stove and the wood would be there. So there were holes up top. So be careful what you say upstairs.

Somebody downstairs is listening. And so I was always given the same room. And I remember so distinctly.

And about three years, four years ago, I was driving through Hagerville, and I saw the screen door. It was my grandma's house. So I pulled over.

And I went up and I knocked on the door. This man answered. I said, sir, my name's David Forrest.

Forrest? Are you Addison's grandson? I said, yes, sir. Come on in. Come on in.

He knew my grandpa, my grandmother. He said, when your grandpa was getting very old, he said, I lived next door. I said, that means I played with your grandson.

He said, yes. He said, I came over to your grandpa and said to him, I like your house better than mine. I'd like to buy your house when you're finished with it.

And he said, when your grandpa died, he said, one of your aunts came and knocked on my door and said, we were given instructions. If you want to buy this house, you get first right of refusal. He said, I bought the house.

He said, do you want to see through? I said, you betcha. What do you want to see? I said, I want to see my bedroom. So I walked up the stairs.

First room was the bathroom. Second door was David's bedroom. I walked in.

There was a bed sitting there where the bed had always stayed. There was a bed there. And I looked, and there was the hole in the floor.

And in the early summer mornings when I would stay there with my grandma, I would wake up, and I'd roll over. The grate was right there. Here's my pillow.

There's the grate. I can still see my grandma right down there. She's put a wooden chair in the middle of the kitchen floor.

I don't know why she moved it from the kitchen table. There's the chair. And my grandma is on her knees praying.

She wasn't a loud, boisterous prayer, but I could hear her clear as a bell. She'd be worshipping Jesus. As my grandma was praying down there at that chair, she was talking to Jesus, and I was hearing God.

You understand what I'm saying there. She was talking to the Lord, but there was a sanctifying influence in her prayer that was resonating in my heart. And on that Sunday morning in that church, I was ready.

I was ready. I'd already had a brief, ever-so-shallow encounter with God through my grandmother's prayers. And I remember distinctly then she'd start praying for her boys and her girls.

My dad had two sisters, and there was a string of brothers. I listened. She prayed for Earl, and then she prayed for Colleen, Uncle Earl's daughter, prayed for Jack, Jack's kids.

I was waiting with bated breath. And, oh, yes, Lord Jesus, I pray for Reg and Marion. Yes.

I pray for little David who's sleeping upstairs. I wasn't asleep. I was listening in.

I was hearing the voice of God through my grandmother's prayer. God was speaking to me, Victor. God was speaking to me.

Precious memories, how they linger. I have so much more to share with you on this topic, and I dare not launch into another strata because that will take us until maybe 1 o'clock. I'll just finish up a little bit here.

The Book of Hebrews is a book of contrasts. Contrast the Old Testament to the New Testament. The old priest replaced by Jesus, the high priest.

The old tabernacle, the temple, contrasted now to you are the temple of God. And the tabernacle that Jesus entered into as our sacrifice was a tabernacle in heaven not made with hands. It's occurred to you Jesus was the priest and Jesus was also the lamb.

He was both. Our faithful high priest. The way and the means of God speaking in the Old Testament, the speakers were prophets, the prophets were listeners, the prophets were speakers.

It was done through God directly to those people. There's scriptural proof for this. That when Isaiah was penning the words, he was penning them as he heard them in his spirit, he actually experienced something.

It was God speaking through Isaiah's pen. But today this book says it's a better message. The New Testament is the answer for all the questions in the Old Testament.

The New Testament does not replace the Old Testament. The New Testament fulfills and is the capstone of the Old Testament. The Old Testament was preparation.

And the New Testament is the glory. But this time that we're in is preparation for the final day, which is coming soon and very soon. We're going to see the king.

Comparing the old with the new. Jesus Christ is the superior one. That's the message of the book of Hebrews.

And when you're reading the book of Hebrews, if you keep these things in mind, every word, every verse, every chapter will make more sense. This writer of the Hebrews is trying to encourage the people, don't give up now. This is better.

Superior to Moses, superior to angels, superior to the Levitical priesthood, superior to the sacrifices, superior to the tabernacle. The old covenant contrasted with the new covenant. God speaks in various times, various ways in times past.

But he spoke in portions, little bits and pieces. When Isaiah talked about Jesus in Isaiah 53, he had no idea he was talking about Jesus. He had a measure of it.

He had a measure. The word of God in the Old Testament was given to us in portions. But in the New Testament, it's not given to us in little bits and pieces.

It's not like a jigsaw puzzle. No, Jesus is the final word. He's the final word.

He's the final word. The word, the message, became flesh, and he lived among us, and we saw his glory. But the message of the Old Testament, although it was in portions, it was in pieces, it was progressive.

It's called progressive revelation. Watch this. The Old Testament was progressive revelation.

Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker is God. End of story. That's all he got.

Then a little more was added. Then a little more was added. And as the children of Israel coming towards Canaan, Moses is saying, this is where Abraham, this is where he came, this is it, this is it.

It was portions and portions. And every prophet gave another portion, another piece of it. And as you go back in the Old Testament, you got to grapple with it.

But the unique thing is that in the New Testament, it's not portions, and it's not progressive. It's final like a thunderclap. Jesus, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending.

Hallelujah. God used men to communicate an emerging truth. Man was the agent, but God was always the source.

This is where I can't go today, Acts chapter 2. I'll just finish with this. On the day of Pentecost, God spoke through the people in the upper room. God spoke and those who heard these men were amazed because these men, being Galileans, were speaking the languages of the many, many people who were there from all over the world.

On the day of Pentecost, God spoke and he's still speaking. Heavenly Father, thank you for being the one who's always there and you've never been silent. You speak to us and how we love it when you speak to us.

You speak directly to us. Your word is imprinted in our hearts and on our lives. How we rejoice to think that in times past, the Holy Spirit moved among men.

The Holy Spirit then came upon men and among some of your heroes, the Holy Spirit dwelt in them. But we are the people who can be not just indwelt by the Spirit, but can be filled with the Spirit to overflowing. Thank you for speaking to us.

In Jesus' name, Amen.