

THE GOD WHO SPEAKS

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Who was the only contemporary person of the 1st century mentioned in the book of Hebrews? Timothy (Heb. 13:23)

Who wrote it? We know nothing about who wrote the book. Some say Paul (no evidence), and others propose Apollos, Barnabas, and Luke. Ultimately God is the divine author of all the books of the Holy Bible, inspiring human authors to write what He intended for them.

Original audience? To the Hebrews, **the Jewish community** that had converted to Christianity. These people have a significant amount of **knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures**. Their conversion brought on them **suffering and persecution**. As a result, **some turned back from Christianity to Judaism**. The author of Hebrews shows the **supremacy of Christ** and encourages them **not to fall away**.

Great lesson: How to read the Old Testament **in proper relation to Christ** [Christologically]. Without the knowledge of the Old Testament, people find it difficult to understand the book of Hebrews.

Date: Probably written before AD 70, the destruction of the Jewish temple.

1. THE GOD WHO SPEAKS

- ❖ **Hebrews 1:1**, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets...”

No formal greetings. Jumps straight to the point.

Long ago: Prior to the incarnation of Christ (the whole Old Testament times)

Many times: Not all at once. In different situations. In different times. In different generations. It is estimated that the **chronology of the Old Testament** covers **more than 1500 years**.

Many ways: Through **dreams** (Gen. 37:5), **visions** (Isa. 1:1), **angels** (Zech. 1:9), **voices** (1 Sam. 3:4) and a few other ways [writing (Dan 5:5), and even Balaam’s donkey (Num. 22:28)!]

God spoke: The nature of God—**God is invisible**

- ❖ **1 Timothy 1:17**, “To the King of the ages, immortal, **invisible**, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”
- ❖ **1 Timothy 6:15-16**, “He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, **whom no one has ever seen or can see**. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.”

❖ **John 1:18, No one has ever seen God.**

Yet, here is the good news:

- ❖ **Hebrews 1:1**, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, **God spoke** to our fathers by the prophets...”

He Is There and He Is Not Silent by Francis Schaeffer

- ▶ God is a God **who speaks**. (Maatlade devudavu neevu...)
- ▶ God speaking is a **revelation of Himself**.
- ▶ None can know God if He didn't **choose** to reveal Himself to us.
- ▶ God need not speak. God need not reveal Himself. He does so **out of His grace**.
- ▶ God is invisible but **He is real** [not unreal]; God is invisible but **He speaks** [not dumb]; God is invisible but **He reveals Himself** [not unknown]; God is invisible but **He is active, in control of all things**, and **accomplishes all His purposes** [not distant and passive]

Note: Biblically, there are **two types of revelation**: **General revelation** (through the nature), affirmed by Romans 1 and Psalms 19. **Special revelation**, which is what Hebrews 1-3 reveals.

2. GOD SPOKE THROUGH THE PROPHETS

- ❖ **Hebrews 1:1**, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, **God spoke to our fathers by the prophets...**”

God spoke to our fathers: To all the previous generations in the OT

God spoke through the prophets: Not any other prophets in the world but **only the prophets in the Old Testament**, such as Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel...etc

- ❖ **2 Peter 1:20-21** affirms, “No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men **moved by the Holy Spirit** spoke from God.”

Observe: The focus is not on God speaking to the prophets, but **God speaking to the people through the prophets**.

- GOD SPOKE TO HIS PROPHETS FOR HIS PEOPLE.

Note: “God spoke **TO** our fathers **BY** the prophets” (**Heb. 1:1**)

Even in the Old Testament, **God did not speak to all people directly**. He spoke to them through **a few people** He has chosen, called “**prophets**”. The **general way** God spoke to His people was in this way:

- ❖ **Deuteronomy 29:29**, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are **revealed** [through the prophet] belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. [Progressive revelation: Later historical, poetical, prophetic books were added]
- ❖ **Hosea 4:6**, My people are destroyed for **lack of knowledge** [knowledge of God/knowing God]; because you have **rejected knowledge**, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have **forgotten the law of your God**, I also will forget your children.
- ❖ **Luke 24:25**, And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that **the prophets have spoken!** **Luke 24:27**, And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them **in all the Scriptures** [prophets’ *spoken words*] the things concerning himself.

Note: The general way God spoke to the people of the Old Testament is **through the inspired and written Scriptures**.

3. GOD SPOKE THROUGH THE SON

Hebrews 1:1-2, “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...**”

“**Long ago**” versus “**these last days**”: The last days began with the incarnation of Christ Jesus and will continue until His return.

Recipient’s context: Some turned back from Christianity to Judaism. The greater revelation of God came through one person more than the OT prophets. He is superior to all the prophets. He is the Prophet of the prophets.

God has spoken to us by his Son: God has revealed Himself **through His Son**.

On the Mount of Transfiguration, when the Lord was with Peter, James and John, and when Moses and Elijah came to visit Christ, **Mark 9:7** records, “And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “**This is my beloved Son; listen to him**”.”

Observation: God has **spoken** to us by his Son speaks about perfect past tense. It doesn’t say God is still speaking through His Son. Everything that God wanted to reveal to His people, God had already spoken through His Son.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF JESUS BEING THE SON OF GOD?

A Principle of Bible Interpretation: Scripture interprets Scripture

- ❖ **Luke 3:23**, Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli.....**Luke 3:38**, the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, **the son of God**.

In the singular definite sense, among human beings, only Adam was called “the son of God”. Because he was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27). The son reflects the Father. RESEMBLANCE AND RELATIONSHIP (Adam was cast out of the garden of Eden after he sinned against God)

- ▶ Adam was the only unblemished reflection of God’s image (in shared attributes). Although Adam’s descendants were also made in God’s image, that image was marred/distorted due to sin (broken windshield).

Similarly, the Lord Jesus was called the “Son of God” because He is the exact image of the Father (infinite attributes). RESEMBLANCE AND RELATIONSHIP

- ❖ **John 10:33,** The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, **make yourself God.**”
- ❖ **John 10:36,** Do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘**You are blaspheming, because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?**

Graeme Goldsworthy argues that “image and likeness are terms of sonship.”

- ❖ **John 14:8-9,** Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? **Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.** How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? [Exact Imprint of God]
- ❖ **Hebrews 1:3,** “He is the radiance of the glory of God and **the exact imprint** (ditto image or representation) of his nature (essence)....”
- ❖ **Colossians 2:9,** “For in him **the whole fullness of deity** dwells bodily,”
- ❖ **Colossians 1:15,** “He is **the image of the invisible God.**”
 - Someone said, “In Him the invisible God becomes visible.”
 - The Lord Jesus is the visible God of the invisible God.

Therefore, Christ being the “Son of God” means the full participation in the deity, reflecting the exact image/likeness of God.

- ❖ **Hebrews 1:1-2,** “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...**”

God has spoken to us by his Son: God has revealed Himself **through His Son.** Jesus Christ is the **supreme, absolute, final,** and **complete revelation** of God. There is no further revelation of God beyond the Son.

- ❖ **John 1:1-3,** “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word [God] was with God, and the Word was God.” **1:14,** “And the Word [God] became flesh and dwelt among us...” [Explain Trinity] **JESUS WAS CALLED THE WORD OF GOD BECAUSE HE IS THE REVELATION OF GOD.**

- In the OT, the Word of God came to the prophets; in the NT, Christ Himself is the Word of God. In the OT, the prophets said, “Thus says the Lord...” In the NT, Christ said, “But I say to you...”

❖ **John 1:18**, “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, **he has made him known.**” Kent Hughes “JESUS EXEGETED GOD.”

Note: God cannot be known in Buddhism. God cannot be known in Islam. God cannot be known in Sikhism. God cannot be known in Hinduism. God can only be known in Christ Jesus, the Son of God. Apart from Christ, God is unknown.

Also, God cannot be known in cults like **Jehovah Witnesses** (Charles Russell), late 19th century) and **Mormonism** (Joseph Smith, early 19th century) but only in **biblical Jesus**.

❖ **Luke 10:22**, All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is **except the Father**, or who the Father is **except the Son** and anyone to whom **the Son chooses to reveal him**.

If God had spoken to us by His Son, how did the Son reveal to us what God had revealed to Him?

A Principle of Bible Interpretation: Scripture interprets Scripture

- ❖ **John 16:14-15**, “I still have many things to say to you [**apostles**], but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for **he will take what is mine and declare it to you** [apostles]. **All that the Father has is mine**; therefore I said that **he will take what is mine and declare it to you.**” [TRINITY]
- ❖ **John 17:6-8**, “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world [**apostles**]. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. **For I have given them the words that you gave me**, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.”
- ❖ **John 17:20**, “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me [**all believers**] **through their word...**” [the teaching of the apostles]
- ❖ **Revelation 1:1**, [The revelation of Jesus Christ], which [**God gave him**] to show [**to his servants**] the things that must soon take place. He made it known by [**sending his angel**] [**to his servant John**]...
- ❖ **1 Corinthians 11:23**, For I **received from the Lord** [divine revelation] what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread...
 - Paul wrote **First Corinthians** (AD 53-55) before the Gospel writers wrote the **Gospels** (after AD 70).

- ❖ **Galatians 1:11-12**, For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a **revelation of Jesus Christ**.
- ❖ **1 Corinthians 14:37-38**, If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that **the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord**. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.

Point:

- ▶ The **Old Testament** is the revelation of God through His prophets.
- ▶ The **New Testament** is the complete revelation of God given to His Son who revealed through His apostles (and close associates of the apostles) for the welfare of the church. The canon is closed.

Once again, reflect: Hebrews 1:1-2, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, **God spoke** to our fathers by the prophets [**which is recorded in the Old Testament**], but in these last days he has **spoken to us by his Son... [which is recorded in the New Testament]**”

Application:

- ▶ The Holy Bible is God’s revelation to us. Read it to know God, not just to find solutions to your problems.
- ▶ Study the Holy Bible, for it is God’s voice/will for us. Don’t look for extrabiblical voices and revelations.
- ▶ Study and meditate on the person Christ Jesus, for He is the final and complete revelation of God.
- ▶ God is the center of Christ’s atonement: **1 Peter 3:18**, “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God...”

Discussion Questions

1. What does the word “God spoke” speak about?
2. Whether in the OT or NT, did God speak to all people directly? What is the general God’s chosen way that God speaks?
3. What is the meaning of Christ being the “Son of God”?
4. What is the difference between Adam being made in God’s image and Christ being the image of God?
5. Is there anything you haven’t understood and require explanation? What insights have you learned from this message? How were you encouraged through this message?