

The Greatest Mouthpiece

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 May 2015

Preacher: Andrew Price

[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, we do thank you again for your word, and particularly your word given by your Son. And Father, we pray now that you would help us to understand it and to live by it.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we are all familiar with the concept of a spokesperson or a mouthpiece, are we not? Someone who speaks on behalf of someone else. So, for example, I saw a job ad on the next slide where President Obama is after a new social media mouthpiece. That is someone who will speak for him in the social media, on Facebook and so on. And the job is advancing Obama's agenda, said the job ad. The job ad also said that it's not the nine to five kind of job, so be ready for hard work. So, you required the right sort of person. But a mouthpiece, a spokesperson, that's what they're meant to do, speak for someone else and advance their agenda. But you do need the right sort of person. So, when a beef company approached an actress, often companies approach stars to be their spokesperson, but a beef company approached the actress Sybil Shepard, who's on the next slide, to be their spokesperson and promote their beef burgers, as she agreed. But then she confessed that she was a vegetarian. You're going to have the right spokesperson, don't you? Some are better than others. But we are all familiar with the idea of a mouthpiece or a spokesperson, someone who speaks for others and advances their agenda. And God has often chosen to use people and angels to be his mouthpiece, his spokesperson for himself, and to advance his agenda for our good. But in chapter one of Hebrews today, we'll see that God's greatest mouthpiece of all time is actually his son, Jesus.

For he is greater than the prophets, point one, verse one. 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. You see the comparison here? In the past with these days.

In the past, God spoke by his prophets, both the prophets as people and the prophets through their writings. And he spoke at many times and in various ways. I wonder if you can think of some of the various ways that God spoke via the prophets. There were visions, weren't there? So Zechariah had a series of visions, as did Ezekiel. You had other people who were role-playing things. So the prophet Ahijah appears to Jeroboam and says, I'm going to take the kingdom from Solomon. And he gets his jacket, he pulls it off and he rips it into 12 pieces, representing the 12 tribes of Israel. And he says, here you go, here's 10 of them. This is what's going to happen. So there's role-playing. In fact, Hosea married a prostitute to show the people what God's relationship with Israel was like. That's pretty serious.

[3 : 24] Well, it wasn't really role-playing. That's what he did. You had talking donkeys, you might remember. You had hands riding on the wall, you might remember. You had a still, small voice.

You had a booming thunder, you know, thundering voice. God spoke in a variety of ways to and via the prophets, recorded in the prophets and their writings.

But it wasn't just in various ways he spoke. He also spoke in lots of pieces, lots of bits. The phrase in verse 1, if you've got your Bibles there, says, at many times, that phrase at many times is literally in many parts or many pieces. And so God's revelation of himself, his word to his people in the past was in bits and pieces. So for example, to Abraham, it was given the promise that all nations would be blessed through him. But then to King David was given a different promise that from King David, a king would rule forever. A forever king would come from David's family.

And then to the prophet Isaiah was the promise that a servant of the Lord would come, who would bring forgiveness of sins. And then Ezekiel, the prophet, was given a vision of a new temple. Zechariah, the prophet, was given a vision of a new Jerusalem. Jeremiah, the prophet, was told of a new covenant. You see, you've got all these different people giving a different bit of God's revelation. God's word was given in bits and pieces. It was certainly a progression to it, for sure. There was a logic to it. David's promises built on Abraham's promises and so on.

But it was incomplete. It was in bits and pieces, bitsy, until, that is, Jesus came. Because in Jesus, all of God's promises are fulfilled. Jesus brings all of God's word together. So on this slide here, we've got some bits and pieces, if you like. You've got the promise of a forever king. You've got the promise of a new covenant. You've got the promise of the servant of the Lord. But if you click the slide again, Jesus is the one who brings them all together, you see. He's the one that completes the picture, fulfills all the promises. I hope you like that, by the way. I worked out on that.

[5 : 41] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. But you get the point, don't you? Bits and pieces in the past, but in Jesus, it all comes together. It's all fulfilled by him. And so he brings the whole word in its full and final form. And that's what the writer is trying to contrast here in verses one and two. In the past, God spoke to us by many prophets, which meant many parts and many ways over a long period of time. But now in these last days, he has spoken to us by one person, his son, which means he speaks in one way. And he brings all these pieces together and gives us one whole complete picture. So Jesus is the greater mouthpiece, greater than the prophets, you see, because he gives the complete picture. In fact, he's not just the mouthpiece or the messenger.

He's actually also the message. He tells us not only about the gospel, but the gospel is about him, you see. And so no longer does God need to speak by many prophets because he has spoken completely and finally by his son. Of course, God can still speak to us in other ways, but they must all be tested against the word spoken through his son. For Jesus is God's full and complete word to us.

We don't need any other word from God. And now the writer of Hebrews gives us evidence for why Jesus is God's greatest mouthpiece. Not only do all the bits and pieces fit together in him, but in the rest of verse two, we're told that Jesus is the one whom he appointed heir of all things. Jesus is the one who will inherit all things and through whom God also made the universe through Jesus. In verse three, the son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven, it says. Now here, the writer draws out seven descriptions about the son.

Which make him the ultimate spokesperson for God. And these descriptions actually form a sandwich, if you like, where the part in the middle is meant to be highlighted as the most important.

And so on the next slide, this is what it looks like. So the first description is that the son is the the heir, the messianic heir, the one who will inherit all things. And then B, he's also the means of creation, verse two said. But then in the middle, you've got C, where Jesus, the son is God.

[8 : 22] And he's described as the radiance of God's glory. He's described as the exact representation of his being. And thirdly, he's described as the sustainer of all things. And then it kind of echoes in B again, down at the second last line, the son is also the means of salvation. And then lastly, the son is the messianic king of all things. There's a deliberate ordering. There's a deliberate way that the writer has written this piece. And he's written it deliberately to highlight part C, that middle part. You see, Jesus as the king or the messiah will inherit and rule over all things. And he is the means of creation and salvation. And so Jesus knows more of God's plan than plans than any other person.

He knows more about what it means to be saved. I mean, he provided the means after all. But the thing that really makes him the ultimate mouthpiece for God is part C there.

Do you see what it says? Verse three, the son is the radiance of God's glory. In other words, he shows God's very character. It's because of this verse that we get the line in the Nicene Creed that says he is light from light, God from God. Jesus is also, verse three, the exact representation or image of God. That is, Jesus' actual being is God, the writer says. And then he says, in case we haven't quite got the point, that Jesus sustains all things by his powerful word. He literally carries all things by his powerful word, brings them to their completion. But that's a description of God, is it not? And so do you see what the writer is saying? He's saying Jesus is God. And so who better to speak God's word than God himself in the son? Who is better equipped to speak God's full and complete revelation than the son who himself is God? You see, Jesus is the perfect mouthpiece for God because he's not only the message, but he's God himself. We have a daughter who thinks she is the third parent in our family. She often acts as our mouthpiece, telling her brother and sister what to do, even when we don't want her to. But even if we did ask her to say something to her brother and sister, even if we did ask her to be our spokesperson, our mouthpiece, and even if she did it without adding her own five cents worth, it wouldn't be as good as us speaking directly to our other children, would it?

I mean, you cannot get a better spokesperson than the person themselves. And because Jesus is God, then you cannot get a better mouthpiece for God, can you? That's why John says in the beginning of his gospel that Jesus is God's word become flesh, because he's the word or the message himself. It's about him.

And he is the perfect messenger for his God himself, who can speak directly and perfectly from the father. And so he's greater than the prophets, a greater mouthpiece spokesperson than the prophets, but he's also greater than the angels who also spoke God's word. Point two, verse four.

[11 : 47] So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say, you are my son? Today I've become your father from Psalm to our first reading, or again, I will be his father and he will be my son. And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, let all God's angels worship him. You see, Jesus inherits the name as son. That is the king, the Messiah, the Christ. Do you remember the son can mean two things? It can mean God, the son, the second person of the Trinity, but it can also mean the king, the Christ, the Messiah.

Do you remember our first reading from Psalm two? The king is said to be God's son. He says, you are my son, you king, you Christ. And so this is the name that Jesus inherits by his death, resurrection, exhortation to the right hand of God. Jesus is declared to be this king, this son of God.

That's the name he inherits. And the writer's point is that which angel has inherited that name? Which angel has been called the son of God, the Messiah? The answer is no angel has been so exalted.

No angel has been given that name. In fact, verse six says that the angels are to worship Jesus as the king. Jesus is clearly greater, you see. And in case we still don't understand that Jesus is greater than angels, the writer continues in verse seven. He says, in speaking of the angels, he says, he makes his angels, probably better, his winds and his servants flames of fire. But about the son, he says, your throne, O God, so that causes the son, God will last forever and ever. A scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. And you have loved righteousness and hated weakness.

Therefore, God, your God has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy. And he also says of the son in the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundation of the earth.

[13 : 55] Jesus was there at the beginning of creation. And the heavens are the work of your hands. And they will perish. But you, son, will remain. The creation will wear out like a garment.

You will roll them up like a robe, like a garment. They will be changed. But you remain the same. And your years will never end. You see what he's saying? The angels are like parts of creation. They are like the wind and they are like fire.

They are parts of the creation which serve the creator who, according to this writer, is Jesus, for he is God. The means of creation, the one through whom the father worked.

And in case we don't understand that, then he continues by saying, well, look, creation will not last. It will be rolled up like a garment. And the angels are part of creation. So they will not last.

But you, the son, you are greater because you will remain forever. You see, the son is superior to the angels. For he rules over them as God and will outlast them. And just for good measure, the writer returns to this theme of Jesus' kingship in verse 13. He says, And to which of the angels did God ever say, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? Now, there are some interesting thoughts and questions we might have about angels from this passage. Like, you know, do they perish with creation? What does that mean?

[15 : 35] Are they like ghosts? Because it says in verse 14, they are spirits. How do they serve us who will inherit salvation? But as interesting as these questions are, we must not miss the main point.

And the main point is that the son is greater. Of course, the question then becomes, well, why are these readers so interested in angels anyway? Why does the writer have to tell them that the son is greater in the first place? The answer comes in part in chapter two, verse two.

Do you notice the message, which is talking about the Old Testament law there? The message was spoken through angels. You see, just like the prophets, the angels in the Old Testament were God's mouthpiece.

They acted as God's spokespeople. In fact, the word angel means messenger. And the particular message they gave was the Old Testament law. And so on the next slide, I have two verses, one from Galatians.

It says the law was put into effect through angels by a mediator who was Moses. And so it seems as though God used angels to tell Moses the law. And then Moses told the people or from Acts chapter seven on the screen, you have received the law as delivered by angels. You see, the readers were not worshiping angels. Rather, they knew the Old Testament law was spoken by angels. And you remember they were tempted to give up on Jesus. Do you remember the context from before? They were tempted to give up on Jesus and go back to Judaism, back to the Old Testament law, back to the prophets and the angels.

[17 : 18] And so the writer is saying, well, let's think about this for a moment. Do you realize that Jesus is actually the greater messenger, greater than the prophets, greater than the angels?

And so if you go back to this Old Testament law, you're going back to an incomplete message spoken by an inferior messenger. When you have Jesus, the greatest mouthpiece before you. It's crazy.

This morning I said it would be like being given a lamb roast, the glory of a lamb roast, and turning from that for baked beans on toast. Well, you might like baked beans on toast, I don't know. Let's use a different illustration. Portia has just opened up down the road, hasn't it?

Okay. This might interest men more than women, but Portia has opened up down the road and it'll be like being given a genuine whole car, a brand new Porsche, and then going, well, that's nice, but I've got some genuine Porsche parts in my garage. I've got a steering wheel, a bonnet, and one tire. So I'm going to turn from the whole car and go back to the genuine parts.

It's crazy, isn't it? That's what the writer is saying. You've got Jesus, the greatest mouthpiece ever who's given us the complete picture. Don't turn from him. Don't give up on following him to go back to the Old Testament, to inferior messengers who spoke an incomplete word that was in parts, bits, and pieces. And so if Jesus is the greatest mouthpiece of God, if he does give God's full and complete word to us, then there really is only one right response we'd have, isn't there?

[19 : 02] We had to listen to him. Point three, our last point in chapter two, verse one. We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard so that we will not drift away, he says. You see, because the son is God's ultimate word, then we had to listen to Jesus. No, he actually says we had to pay the most careful attention to the message that Jesus brings, to the gospel message. And this means more than a casual reading, it requires conscious effort, a deliberate attention. It means, as the older preachers would say, reading, marking, and inwardly digesting this message. It means living it out. And there are three reasons we had to do this.

At first, so that we won't drift away from Jesus and into judgment. Do you see verse two there? And so that we will not drift away, verse two, because since the message spoken through the angels was binding, that's the Old Testament law, and every violation and disobedience received as just punishment back then, how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? You see what he's saying?

You know, if people ignored the law back then and did not escape judgment for it, and now we've got a greater spokesperson and a greater message, how on earth do you think we're going to escape judgment if we neglect that message? The answer is there's no chance of escaping it.

And so we're to pay attention to it so that we won't drift away from Jesus and into certain judgment. And the second reason we had to pay close attention is because this message offers a great salvation.

Do you notice the writer calls the law spoken by the angels there? He calls it a message, verse two. But do you notice what he calls the gospel spoken by Jesus? A great salvation. I love the comparison.

[20 : 59] The message of the gospel that Jesus died for our sins and rose again to secure new life for us is a great message, for it brings great salvation. It saves us from the punishment we deserve, and we do deserve it, and instead brings forgiveness and certain hope of heaven free of charge.

It's a great salvation, a great message. And so it is one worth listening to. And the third reason we are to listen to it is because it is reliable, which are the point of verses three and four. But time is getting away, so let me move to the application for us. And I trust it's pretty clear. We are to pay attention to the word of Christ. For if we don't, we will drift away from him and into judgment.

And so for those who have been neglecting this word, will you start paying attention to it? Will you begin by turning to the Lord Jesus in repentance and faith? The message is that Jesus died for your sins so that you can be forgiven, purified before God and find life eternal. And yet, if you neglect this message, then you will only find judgment eternal when we appear before God.

And so will you instead listen, pay attention to this message by turning to Christ and believing in him? That's the first way to listen. And for those who have already done that, who've already turned to Christ and listened by believing in him, then the question becomes, are we continuing to pay attention to this gospel message? Yet with its implications fleshed out in the New Testament and its background in the Old Testament. And this means not simply glossing over what it says, but thinking on it and living it out in our lives. As I said, it requires conscious effort and deliberate attention and reflection. It kind of reminds me of a bit of gardening, not that I'm a gardener at all, actually. In fact, on the next slide, I was given this plant and within a week, it looked like that.

Why? Because I neglected it. I'm told plants and gardens need constant care. They need attention because if you neglect them, then they will die. And not straight away, of course, but over time.

[23 : 19] We are like gardens whom God grows by his word. And so we need to constantly listen to this word. We are to keep applying it to our lives and seeking to live it out. Because if we neglect it, we could drift away and die spiritually. It won't happen overnight, but it might happen gradually. I mean, does a boat generally drift away slowly or quickly? It's slowly, isn't it? I mean, the word drift implies slow motion. And the real danger is that over time, bit by bit, by neglecting the word, before we know it, we've drifted away from Jesus and away from salvation. That's why I'm so encouraged that so many people here do pay attention. Many people here use those every day with Jesus books.

Do you know those books? And they're very simple and they're pretty good. But most of all, they keep you listening to God's word. It's great. It keeps going. And if you're interested in other resources to help you, then please let me know. Send me an email or ring the office and I'll get something to you. I was speaking with a friend who is a lecturer at a Bible college. So, you know, he's one of the big wigs and, you know, PhD and all the rest of it. Been overseas to present papers and so on and so on. And I was asking, you know, how I could pray for him, thinking, you know, it'd be some important prayer point to do with, I don't know, the fate of the Anglican church in Australia or something. You know, I'm being silly. But his prayer point was this. He said that he might keep setting aside time to read the Bible with his family. That's how simple it was. You see, for him, what mattered most for him and his family was that they would pay close attention to the word of Christ. Nancy Lyons at 745 passed away last Friday morning. Her funeral is this Wednesday at 1030.

But she paid close attention to God's word. She said to me in the couple of weeks before she passed that she was looking forward to being with Christ. You see, she paid attention to the promises in scripture. She paid close attention to it, so much so that it changed how she lived. It gave her hope and joy that she looked forward to being with her Lord. And it brought a great comfort because she paid close attention to his word. May we continue to listen carefully to the word of Christ, that we might, what will not be like a boat that drifts from its moorings, but like a garden that grows because of constant care and close attention. Let's pray. Our gracious heavenly father, we do thank you for your word most clearly given by your son, the Lord Jesus. Father, we pray that you would help us to pay close attention to it. Indeed, we thank you that you have given us your spirit who does help us and who does apply this word to our lives. And so by your spirit, we pray, help us to keep reading, marking and inwardly digesting your great word of salvation. For we ask it in Jesus name. Amen.