



GOD HAS SPOKEN TO US BY HIS SON

Communication is something that is central to the successful running of the civil service. There are courses, working groups, and strategies about it. Whatever post you are in, and regardless of grade, it's almost certain that you engage in work-related communication, both by sending 'messages' and receiving them.

Here, in the title of this article (taken from Hebrews 1:1-2), we have a startling – indeed, marvellous and unparalleled – example of communication: what has been called 'God's Last Word to Man'.¹ It's what Christmas is really meant to be about. Let's pause from the busyness and traditions of the season to reflect on this momentous truth.

God has spoken

There is nothing unusual in the fact that God should speak: it is what we would expect of a personal being. You only need to read as far as the third verse of the Bible to see 'God said'. That verse is deeply instructive: what God said was, 'Let there be light'. What a command! The remainder of the verse describes the outcome of God speaking: 'and there was light'. We can immediately see that God speaks with authority, and that what he says is significant. (This is so unlike ourselves, with our sometimes idle words and often ineffective instructions.) The words 'and God said' recur frequently in Genesis 1. By the end of the chapter, God is speaking to mankind, giving instructions (see verse 28).

So it continues throughout the Pentateuch, and beyond. By the end of the Old Testament, God had revealed much about Himself, and His purposes for humanity, fallen and sinful as we are shown to be.

God has spoken to us

This is a humbling truth. In Old Testament times, the few who were privileged to experience a visitation from the LORD were often deeply fearful, e.g. the children of Israel at Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:19), and Gideon (Judges 6:22). Something similar was true of Mary (Luke 1:29).

Meanwhile, God did not give His spoken or written word to the Gentiles (see Acts 17:30 and Romans 3:2). We might ask: has God not spoken to just some

1. The title of a book by G. Campbell Morgan, subtitled *Studies in Hebrews*. At the start of John's gospel, the Lord Jesus is called 'The Word'.

privileged few – the inspired writers of the New Testament or those who heard the Lord Jesus in the first century? The answer is ‘no’. Rather like a Team Brief, God’s message has been ‘cascaded’: it was first spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ, then conveyed by those who heard Him (Hebrews 2:3). Paul left his (pagan Gentile) hearers in Athens in no doubt about the scope of the intended audience: “God... now... commands all people everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30, NIV).

God has spoken to us by His Son

Hebrews 1:1-2 make a sharp contrast between how God had spoken in the past, i.e. by the prophets, and how He has spoken now, i.e. by His Son (literally ‘in Son’). Verses 2-9 make it absolutely clear that the Son is Himself God. They refer to: -

A Unique Event

God’s speaking by His Son happened at a specific point in history – called by the first century writer of Hebrews ‘these last days’ (verse 2). In chapter 2 he describes it as being “made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death” (verse 9). In verse 14 he explains that this involved partaking of flesh and blood – the Incarnation.

“Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!
Hail the Incarnate Deity!
Pleased as Man with man to dwell,
Jesus our Emmanuel!”

A Unique Person

We have already touched on this. Verses 2 and 3 tell us that He is The Heir of All Things, The Creator, The Radiance of God’s Glory, The Exact Representation of God’s Being, and The Upholder of the Universe. How much there is to meditate upon in each of these descriptions! In verse 8, the Son is addressed as God. His throne is for ever and ever.

“Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing:
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord!”

A Unique Work

Verse 3 brings us to the supreme purpose of His Incarnation: to make purification for sins. The word ‘purification’ denotes cleansing. This was only possible through the shedding of His blood (Hebrews 9:14; 1 John 1:7). Verse 3 proceeds to say that He ‘sat down’. This expression indicates the

completion of His work upon the cross; it is in contrast to the Old Testament priests who were constantly standing because their work was never finished (Hebrews 10:10-12).

“Amazing love! How can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?”

What is our response?

Communications are always issued for a purpose, and often require a response (usually, in the civil service, within a deadline). That is supremely so in what we have been considering. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews goes on to ask (chapter 2:3): “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord....?” He urges those readers who have not yet believed to do so: to cease from their own efforts and enter into the ‘rest’ that God has provided (Chapter 4). Those readers who truly believe are given many exhortations to persevere and to progress. Here’s one: “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (chapter 12:28).

“Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my heart, my life, my all!”