

"GOD GETS THE LAST WORD" Hebrews 1:1-3

INTRODUCTION: Some people just have to have the last word! You know the type I am talking about! Regardless of the topic, they hold such a high opinion of their own perspective that what they have to say on any subject is the ultimate pronouncement as far as they are concerned.

ILLUS. Perhaps you and your friends are discussing a problem you have run into and how you are handling it. The "last word" person waits for the right opportunity—or interrupts if necessary—and makes a definitive statement like, "Well, here is what you have to do..." They probably are not trying to say that everyone else is stupid for not seeing the solution so obvious to them, but the net effect of their pronouncement is just that.

In the midst of a pluralistic society such as ours, hope for consensus on matters as diverse as politics and religion, parenting and diet, economic policy and education, is hard to come by! We are too different as a nation to agree on very much that counts.

The news media have been filled with articles and presentations on tolerance and freedom but the catch becomes obvious when my freedoms conflict with yours! With relativism as its foundation, nothing in our society can take a stand on anything as *absolutely true*.

As we in the church come to grips with the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, we will grow increasingly stronger in our convictions that apart from Him we are doomed to utter chaos and the desperately wicked imaginations of a godless people. When we have wrestled with the facts and examined our conclusions we will be more convinced than ever that Jesus Christ is Lord. Upon that foundation, and that one alone, we *can stand* with confidence on what is *absolutely true*.

When the secular world asks, "where did you get this final word?", we can answer gladly with what the Lord has said,

"GOD HAS SPOKEN TO US IN HIS SON!"

Jesus Christ is God's final word to the world until He comes in judgment. Jesus is God's way of getting the last word about everything!

THESIS: Jesus Christ is the ultimate revelation of God and the final word on everything pertaining to life and godliness.

ILLUS: In the 4th century, Athanasius wrote of a monk named Antony "whose reputation was such that even the Roman emperors wrote him letters..." *"Do not be astonished if an emperor writes to us, for he is a man; but rather wonder that God wrote the Law for men and has spoken to us through His own Son"* (P.E. Hughes, p. 37)

We must never cease to be amazed at the love which God demonstrated in that act of loving compassion and gracious mercy!
It is the Son, Jesus Christ, who is exalted in this masterful epistle to the Hebrews!

The Revelation of God to Man Has Been Completed

- Nothing can be added to nor taken away from God's final word in Christ.

Hebrews 1:1-2 *God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,*
² *in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.*

GOD HAS SPOKEN...Therefore, two parallel statements follow:

- **HE SPOKE LONG AGO TO THE FATHERS IN THE PROPHETS**
- **HE SPOKE IN THESE LAST DAYS TO US IN HIS SON**

➤ *These two parallel statements are foundational for a proper understanding of Old and New Testaments.*

--Each suggests four things: When? How? To Whom? What?

I. HE SPOKE LONG AGO TO THE FATHERS IN THE PROPHETS

--This first stage in God's speaking to man is **preparatory** and **provisional**.

--His Word through the prophets was a means toward an end, not the end itself.

A. HIS TIME

1. Two words for "old" are generally used:

ἀρχαῖος= old in point of time

παλαιός= old in point of use, ready to be replaced

2. The second is used in Hebrews 1:1

Heb 1:1... Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάλαι ὁ θεὸς λαλήσας ... ("...in many portions and in many ways, God, after He spoke long ago ... ")

--The sense of the wording is that God spoke in the past in a way that now is ready to be replaced.

--What He said was valid and true, but **preparatory** for the complete word of truth that was to be revealed later, **provisional** until the final word was given.

Matthew 9:16,17 *"But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an **old garment**; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results. ¹⁷ "Nor do men put new wine into **old wineskins**; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out, and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved."*

Example: Temple worship was the best expression of an atoning act for sin up to that time. But now, the ultimate means of atoning for sin has been provided for through Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 9:11-12 *But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; ¹² and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.*

B. HIS METHOD

--God could have communicated with the human race any way He wanted and whatever He chose would have been good.

--But in His infinite wisdom we cannot fathom, He chose a method that employed people just like those He wanted to hear and understand what He was saying.

1. He spoke "in the prophets" (i.e. to those with human voices)

a. "In many portions"

--Over 1000 years with some 30+ writers but still with only one Author!

b. "In many ways"

- Visions
- Parables

- Types and symbols
- Angels
- God Himself spoke to Moses

Note: “Men were used – their minds and their personalities were used – but they were totally controlled by the Spirit of God. Every word they wrote was the word that God decided they should write and delighted in their writing.” (p. 3 McArthur)

--Not mechanical dictation as some think

2. *He spoke in pictures*

--Remembering that this first revelation was preparatory and provisional helps us grasp the progressive nature of God's speaking!

--His plan begins to unfold and take shape in the old and broad pictures are painted of what is to come.

--The old covenant provided a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.

Hebrews 8:5 *who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "SEE," He says, "THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN."*

--The prophets themselves were not sure of what was being prepared and were curious about God's plan.

1 Peter 1:10-12 *As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry,¹¹ seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.¹² It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things into which angels long to look.*

--So He often spoke through the prophets in pictures and symbolic language.

C. HIS AUDIENCE

--Because of His great love, God communicated that love for those created in His image, the people He designed to live for His glory and to enjoy the life He gave them.

1. He spoke to the “fathers”

--Those who walked by faith in the light available.

2. He spoke so that they might be faithful.

Hebrews 11:39-40 *And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,⁴⁰ because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect.*

Application: It is a fair observation to make that they were often more faithful in their limited knowledge than we are in our full knowledge!

D. HIS THEME

--The message has never changed from the beginning when He first spoke His Word... Salvation will come!

--The message of God's grace was spoken through all that He has said to us, the message that...

- we have broken faith with our Creator and rebelled against Him, arousing His wrath against our sin

- we have brought on ourselves a just punishment which all of us deserve
- we have a promise of forgiveness and freedom from certain condemnation if we believe in Him who calls on us to receive new life by faith in His promises and provisions in a coming Merciful Savior and Reigning King

Luke 24:44 Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

Acts 26:22-23 "And so, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; ²³ that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."

1. Messiah is coming to save

--The prophets wrote of One who was coming to save His people from their sins, to be a Savior for all who put their faith in Him.

Isaiah 53:6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

2. Messiah is coming to reign

--They wrote also of One who is coming not only to humble Himself in dying for our sin, but who is exalted to reign over all things as King forever.

Dan. 7:13-14 "... And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. ¹⁴ "And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations, and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

--The groundwork having been completed, God preserved His Word through the prophets in the Holy Scriptures.

--Now, God brings forth the last word that will ever need to be given regarding these things...He provides that which is "BETTER" the key theme of the book of Hebrews.

II. HE SPOKE IN THESE LAST DAYS TO US IN HIS SON

--Whereas the first stage was **preparatory** and **provisional**, now He speaks **finally** and **fully** in His Son.

John 1:1, 14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

- When God spoke in Christ, it was not the means toward an end, but the end itself!

A. HIS TIME

--For reasons known only to God, the final and full expression of His perfect will through His Son came when it did because from His sovereign perspective, time was right.

Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵ in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

1. "In these last days"

--The days of the Son of God coincided with the last days of the Old Covenant.

--Epistle to the Hebrews was written prior to 70 A.D. when the Temple still stood and it was not entirely clear to Jewish believers how all these things fit together.

--They were often confused between the **shadow** (Temple worship and sacrifices) and the **reality** (Jesus Christ Himself).

2. These last days saw the summing up of the old, the fulfillment of all its promises, and the now-present reality of the promised Messiah!

--God accomplished all these things when Jesus, the Incarnate Word, came to bring God's final word to bear on the circumstances of a fallen world.

B. HIS METHOD

--Prior to this point, the word spoken by God was inspired, or God-breathed, through human instruments, but in Christ the word was not just inspired but incarnate, fleshed out in a person.

--His method was personal...the Word became flesh.

1. He spoke in and through His Son

--Whenever Christ Jesus spoke, God spoke since He is God Incarnate!

2. He is indeed the reality, the complete revelation

--When we receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, everything we need is in Him!

--He is God's Final Word to which nothing else can be added.

Note: Some will accuse Christians of being narrow at this point, but when the Truth is complete, nothing outside of it can be added to make it more complete!

--The words written by the apostles which document His Word in the New Testament come with the power of His own voice, the same authority as if He had written them or spoken them in our hearing.

ILLUS. Some of you may have run into what is sometimes called "red letter" versions of the Bible, referring to those editions of the Bible with the words of Jesus printed in red.

The idea behind that approach is that what Jesus directly spoke has more authority and truth than the rest of the New Testament. I have actually heard evangelical Bible teachers dismiss something Paul taught by saying that what Jesus said was different and gave them the right to choose Jesus over Paul.

What they do not realize in doing that is that they deny the inspiration and authority of the Bible when they make that kind of distinction. What Jesus said was the Word of God and always lines up with what the Holy Spirit inspired in the biblical writers—God Himself being the Author, Son and Spirit making the very words of God known!!

C. HIS AUDIENCE

--As the voice of God calling out for lost sheep, the audience of God's last word on life, now and forevermore, is for everyone living desperate lives without hope, walking blindly through a dark world!

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."*

--Whoever hears and whoever believes—that is His audience and the ones to whom He appeals.

1. "Who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

--The gospel is a new covenant intended to be spoken to all who will hear so that they may receive Jesus Christ!

2. The Author of Hebrews wrote to a community of Jews in this epistle (whose location is not certain):

a. Hebrew Christians

--They were somewhat confused about Christ's new priesthood, new temple, new sacrifice, and new sanctuary so the apostle directs this epistle to show them how and why it is a better covenant.

--We ourselves must be instructed!

b. Hebrew Non-Christians Who Are Intellectually Convinced

--Intellectually convinced but spiritually uncommitted, living as if what they say they believe is not really true.

--There are those like that present in this and most congregations today!

--To them he speaks some hard words to convince them of their need to act!

Hebrews 2:1-3a *For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. ² For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?*

Hebrews 10:26 *For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,*

c. Hebrew Non Christians, Not Convinced

--To them he speaks so as to convince them that Jesus Christ is who He said He was and is now who He claimed to be!

- The target audience, then, of the gospel spoken by God in Christ Jesus is sinful mankind, lost sheep in need of a Savior!

D. HIS THEME IN SPEAKING

--Messiah has come and with Him a **perfect salvation** and a **glorious reign!**

1. His Salvation Has Come

...and it is perfectly complete
...sacrifice has been made, once for all

--A sinless and sufficient offering has been made by a blameless and beautiful Savior!

2. His Reign Shall Come

...and it will have no end!

--A kingdom under the sovereign dominion of a glorious King..."*Jesus shall reign wher'er the sun does its successive courses run!*"

CONCLUSION: With all the debate about religion and philosophy and worldview, who gets to have the last word? Whoever builds the biggest monument or building? Whoever shouts the loudest? Whoever promises the most in

worldly goods...allows the most freedom from moral restraint? The debate rages on in nearly every corner of the culture!

However, we who know Jesus Christ have received the final Word from God. God Himself gets the last word in all the discussion and He has said without hesitation or confusion that Jesus is His final Word—on everything!!

Therefore, we must listen to what He says and not be confused by shadows which merely point to the substance...the opposition which runs to any answer that promises them more control...the skeptics who refuse to accept any suggestion of a supernatural solution. God gets the last word.

We have that last word—God's Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ! All who receive Him find the only one who is the substance our salvation, the only solid foundation for life now and forever!

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