



Hebrews 1:1-2 God Speaks

Summary: God is not an idea, He is a person to be known, loved, listened to, and obeyed.

Several years ago I remember having a conversation with a Muslim religious leader, an imam, on the subject of prayer. He said, "If you speak to God, that's good. If God speaks to you, you're crazy."

He's not alone in that view. For many people, God is up there, somewhere, but He's busy with God stuff and the best we can do is leave a message hoping He'll respond and fix some of the really bad stuff down here when He has a chance. We speak to God, but don't really expect to hear back.

So here's what I want to do this morning. I want to help us know that God speaks. He is a person, not an idea or a force. And not only does He speak, He is both patient and persistent in His speech, He *wants* to gain our attention. So, the question I want to pose is: do you hear Him? I'm *telling* you, God speaks and I'm *asking* do you hear Him?

Look with me at

Hebrews 1:1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by *His Son*...

We're two verses in, we haven't even finished the first sentence of the book and already we've been told twice: God speaks. He spoke **to the fathers through the prophets** and He has spoken **to us by His Son**, Jesus. So, according to Scripture, *God speaks*. And He speaks **to us**.

Did you notice that? Do you see these two words, because they are incredibly important, God has spoken **to us**. Are *you* a part of *us*? Do you hear God speak? Are you listening?

It turns out God speaks a lot.

If you start at the beginning of the Bible, in the book of Genesis, you find God speaking in the very first chapter. Listen, this is how the Bible begins:

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

3 Then God **said**, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4 And God saw the light, that *it was* good; and God divided the light from the darkness. 5 God **called** the light

Day, and the darkness He **called** Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.

And if you keep reading it keeps repeating “and God said” “and God called” all throughout the narrative of creation. Ten times in just the first chapter we are told God spoke. I want you to notice that, consider it, don’t skip over it: God speaks and He has spoken from the very beginning.

This is who He is, it’s what He does and you shouldn’t take it for granted, because, again, there are plenty of people who don’t expect to hear from God. Even if they believe in Him, they’re not sure He speaks. In fact, they’re pretty sure He doesn’t because they’ve never heard from Him. But here, on the very first pages of Scripture, we’re told that He does. And later we’re told that as God once spoke to creation, now creation speaks of God to us.

Ps 19:1 The heavens proclaim the glory of God.
The skies display his craftsmanship.
2 Day after day they continue to speak;
night after night they make him known.
3 They speak without a sound or word;
their voice is never heard.
4 Yet their message has gone throughout the earth,
and their words to all the world. (NLT)

If you’ve ever been moved by the beauty of a sunset or stunned by a landscape, captivated by a mountain range or waterfall, if you’ve ever looked at an animal and said, “that is so amazing!” if you’ve ever felt a baby kicking inside the mother’s growing belly – or ever watched your own skin move on the outside as a baby moved inside; ever held a tiny child, or even a kitten or puppy and gone tender inside with wonder – God was speaking to you through Creation, through the created world.

Tim Keller speaks of this as a Cosmic Welcome Mat¹ rolled out by God, an invitation to look for Him, discover Him, and study Him. Because, when we look around we see evidence of intentionality and design everywhere - things tend to work and they tend produce. It is the joy of scientists and patient observers to discover the patterns and processes behind it all, and the joy of designers and engineers, artists and craftsmen, to assemble it into useful forms, but the fact of the matter is, we study, enjoy, explore, and harness materials and forces *that we did not produce on our own*.

We’re like kids playing with Legos. We can build all kinds of fantastic and amazing creations by assembling the blocks – but sometimes we need to stop and ask: hey, where did all the blocks come from? Not where did I buy them, or who gave this set, but who originally conceived them? Who made the blocks, that fit together so well, who designed the things that I’m now using to make all this fun stuff? Who engineered them? Who had

¹ Keller, 129f.

the first idea to make something that I'm now using with all my creativity? And the answer is, God. God did.

Augustine (AD 354-430), the famous theologian from the early church in North Africa, was the first to label this common grace – the kindness God shows to all people, intending for it to eventually point us back to Him.

So, as an aspect of common grace God speaks to every human being that ever lives through the Lego blocks of creation. He gives us all the parts and pieces, things like molecules, minerals, and materials, that we assemble to make the things we want in life, things to play with and enjoy, from aspirin to iPhones – we make things that make our lives better, but we do it by building with God's Legos – the toys He left here for us to discover and play with.

And, there is another way God speaks. He speaks to us through Creation, but He also speaks to us through conscience.

Do you ever have a thought or idea enter your heart or mind and then, before you can even act on it, you get a sense that, "No, I shouldn't do that." Where does that come from? What is that?

We read in the first chapters of the book of Romans that it's your conscience and God is trying to speak to you through it, to keep you from doing things you should not do, or encouraging you to do things that you should do.

So, both Creation and conscience are intended to point us toward God, to get our attention, to wake us up spiritually and start us asking questions.

In theological terms, all of this is called General Revelation, the ways God communicates to all human beings in all places, at all times. But there is also a category of Special or Specific Revelation, a more direct and personal form of communication. We saw that God spoke to Creation in Genesis 1, and now Creation speaks to us. But if you keep reading you discover that God also made Adam and Eve and He spoke to them.

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and **God said to them**, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

In other words, use My Lego blocks and build cool stuff.

But think about this: Adam and Eve were surrounded by the beauty of Creation which testified to them of the glory of God, and they had their conscience within them, on top of that they heard directly from God what they were and were not to do in life, God spoke to them clearly, *and they still rebelled and chose their own path*. They choose their own

preference, their own opinion, their own interpretation over everything God had clearly communicated.

But how did God respond? He communicated again! He spoke to them of the judgment they would receive for their rebellion, but also of the hope of salvation He would provide if they would repent – which means to turn away from the wrong they had done, and seek to live according to God’s commands instead of their own desires – to live in submission to God instead of rebellion.

And so, if you continue reading Genesis, you find God speaking to people over and over again as the history of humanity unfolds. He speaks directly to Noah and Abraham giving them very specific direction and tasks. He speaks to Jacob in a dream and later interprets dreams through Joseph.

God speaks to Moses, again giving very specific direction and calling. And after God has used Moses to lead His people out of Egypt, they gather at Mt Sinai and God speaks to the entire nation, but it freaks the people out and they tell Moses – you go listen to God and then tell us what He says. So Moses does and God gives further direction and tells him ‘Now write this down,’ and there we have the beginning of Scripture – God giving a message and saying, write it down, preserve it.

So, once again with the people of Israel, you have people who receive the testimony of Creation around them, conscience within them, and God above them, all speaking, all pointing to God, all testifying to them about who God is, what He’s doing, and how they should live – and just like Adam and Eve and everyone who descended from them, the people of Israel resist and rebel against what God says.

And yet, God remains persistent and patient in His communication. He sends them prophets who communicate messages specifically stating, “[thus saith the Lord](#).” There was no ambiguity. In fact, they were often known in their own times as “[the man of God](#).” But people were inconsistent in receiving their messages.

They might hear God’s message, understand God’s calling for a time but then drift away from Him again as the months and years went on becoming distracted by other things and other desires. Perhaps you can relate?

This was the history of Israel for hundreds of years as God sent them people like Elijah and Elisha, and Nathan, Hosea and Isaiah and Jeremiah, Amos, Daniel and Zechariah. God spoke through Balaam’s donkey. He spoke through direct messages from the Angel of the Lord. He spoke through visions, and by writing on the wall in Belshazzar’s palace. And every time God spoke, He shared essentially the same message: repent, that is, stop wandering away from God, turn back toward Him, and live for and with Him instead.

So, here is where I want us to stop for a moment and marvel at what we read in Hebrews:

Hebrews 1:1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, **2** has in these last days spoken to us by *His Son*...

Can we appreciate what this says? *God*, who has spoken to us in all these other ways, speaks *again* to get our attention and save us *from our own sin*.

Think about the process of drawing a picture – Creation and conscience give us the outline and the shadows, there's something there, but it's hard to know or see exactly what. Then specific revelation like the prophets recorded in Scripture fill in the picture, they add some details, but the picture is still incomplete. So Jesus came and not only filled out the picture, He brought the picture to life and it walked right off the page.

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

Friends, this should shock us, it should stun us. The persistence and patience of God should overwhelm us. That God, who already speaks to us through Creation, who already speaks to us through conscience, who speaks to us through the prophets and Scripture, would *also* speak to us through His Son – through Jesus Christ! This should humble us and amaze us and provoke us to worship.

Any parent in this room understands why this is so amazing - because you're always trying to figure out, how do I communicate with my child? How do I get them to understand? Whether we're talking about toddlers or teenagers, the problem's the same.

And after you've told someone something a dozen or more times, you start to lose your patience, you become a lot less gracious. Now, maybe you're a better person than I am, maybe you can say things two dozen, or three dozen times, but at some point, we all grow weary of trying to tell people what to do, what not to do, and how to live.

So, why does God keep pressing in? Why does He keep communicating? After telling us what we need to hear so many times, in so many ways, why keep speaking?

Two reasons. First, because, just like a father or mother, He really does love the child, He really does love us.

But second, because we need more than just information, we need salvation.

We need more than just a message, we need a Messiah, a Savior. And that is why, after speaking in so many ways, to so many people, about so many things, God **has in these last days spoken to us by His Son**.

Notice those words, because they are important: God has not just spoken to us *through* Jesus, He has spoken to us *by* Jesus. You grammar nerds might be able to appreciate the fact that the preposition is actually *in* – God has spoken to us *in* Jesus.

Jesus was more than just a prophet, more than just another really great teacher. The Sermon on the Mount is full of great stuff, but what happens when you can't keep it? What happens when you fall short? What happens when you get tired, or you're having a bad day and you snap?

Creation is speaking, our conscience is speaking, Scripture is speaking, we don't have a problem with knowing the right thing to do, we have a problem with how to recover once we've failed, or with continuing to do what is right even we're tired, or it's hard, or we don't feel like it.

We have a problem with sin.

And so, Jesus didn't just come to give us more information, though He did do that. He came to be a sacrifice for us. To be the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. He came that you might be forgiven of all your faults and all your failures, all your shortcomings and all your not quite good enoughs, He came to forgive you of it all, fully, freely, and forever. He came to restore us in our relationship with God. And that is why God has spoken to us not just *through* His Son, but *by His Son*, in His Son.

God is saying something to us in the identity of Christ – He's saying we needed more than just a message, we need more than just information. And He's saying that no one else can help us with it – our greatest need is not a psychologist or a professor or a physician, or even a prophet or a pastor that for that matter – the thing we need more than anything else in this world, is a Messiah, a Savior, we need someone to restore us in our relationship with God and no one can do that but God Himself, so He did – and He speaks all of this to us *by His Son*.

We understand it when we consider not just the message of Jesus, but His identity and His actions. That the Son of God came, lived a sinless, perfect life and died a sacrificial death – was crucified, dead, and buried, and then rose again from the grave offering new life to all who will put their trust in Him.

And now, He continues to speak today. Creation still testifies to the glory of God. The majesty and wonder of the natural world can and do captivate us, fill us with a sense of awe and make us ask: where did all this come from and where is it all going? What happens to me when I die?

And, our conscience still convicts us – we know things we have done are wrong, we know people have wronged us, we all have this deep demand for justice inside – where does that come from, and how do we satisfy it? We turn to Scripture and begin to find answers, and then we come to Jesus and it all makes sense. Everything falls in place.

Jesus said **John 10:27** *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*

Do you? Do you hear the voice of Jesus? Do you hear when God speaks? On the night before He was crucified Jesus told His disciples:

John 14:25 “These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

He went to tell them:

John 16:12 “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

We began this morning by reading

Hebrews 1:1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son...

Friends, God is speaking – to you, to me, to us. Now, you don’t get your own private interpretation – that can lead to crazy places. But God is speaking. Through creation, through conscience, and most clearly through Christ. He is speaking through Scripture and through His Spirit which guide us in Christ.

Church, you should not be surprised to hear God speak in your life. In fact, you should feel deprived if you do not. He is not just an idea or a concept or a power, He is not distant or disinterested. He is personal and real and He desires a relationship, an ongoing, growing relationship with you rooted, anchored, and established in Christ.

So here’s what I want to do – I want to pray that God would speak clearly to us today. For some of you He’s already been speaking, and you need to listen. You need to receive what He’s saying and stop trying ignore it or pretend like you don’t hear. He might be calling you to repent or He might be calling you to press in and you’re not sure you want to. You need to know: He wouldn’t be calling you to do if He wasn’t going to walk with you through it. God can and will give you the power and strength to do whatever He’s calling you to.

Others of you need to remember what God has said – you don’t need anything new; you need to go back to what you may have lost sight of. Let’s ask God to bring that back to your mind and make it clear again.

But others of you do need to hear from God, you’re seeking guidance, instruction, direction, and you need to know what to do. Let’s ask God to speak in a way you can understand – His sheep hear His voice, right? His Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Let’s ask for the direction you need.

Let’s pray. I’m *telling* you God speaks, but I’m also *asking*: are you listening, do you hear Him?



Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

Hebrews 1:1-2 God Speaks

Summary: God is not an idea, He is a person to be known, loved, listened to, and obeyed.

- How much time and effort do people put into learning a foreign language so that they can understand and communicate with other people? How does the effort of learning a foreign language compare to learning to hear and communicate with God? How are the two ideas similar and how are they different?
- How have you heard God speak in each of the following ways?
 - Through Creation – has God ever communicated to you through nature or the physical world? Ever gotten your attention or stirred something in your soul?
 - Through conscience – have you ever had a deep burning conviction that something was the right, or wrong, thing to do?
 - Through Scripture – has God ever brought a particular verse or passage to life in a profound way?
 - Through Christ – what have you learned or experienced through Jesus?
 - Through the Spirit – how have you experienced the Holy Spirit's direction in your life? Is this a regular, or occasional, event?
- How can you be sure what you hear is from God?
- Have you ever considered how many times, and in how many ways, God has spoken and does speak? How does knowing this affect your thoughts of God? What does his patient and persistent attempts at communication tell you about His character?
- What is one area where you really need to hear from God right now? Who can you share this need with and ask to pray with you and for you that you would receive the guidance you need?
- Do you think people have a more difficult time with hearing God speak, or with responding to what they hear? Why?
- Explore Psalm 19 and consider: how do the testimony of Creation and the testimony of Scripture fit together?
- Review Romans 1 and 2. What happens when people reject what can be known of God?