

Sermon 5, Reading Scripture With the Hebrew Writer, Hebrews 1:5-13

Proposition: The way the Hebrew writer uses Scripture teaches us important truths about how to read and preach it.

- I. Scripture Is God's Speech
- II. Scripture Is God's Complete Speech, vv. 5, 13
- III. Scripture Applies in Heaven as Well as on Earth, v. 6a
- IV. Scripture Is About Christ
 - A. It Records Dialogue Between the Father and the Son, vv. 5a, 8-9, 13
 1. Psalm 2
 2. Psalm 45
 3. Psalm 110
 - B. It Records Prophetic Oracles from the Father about the Son, v. 5b
 - C. It Records the Father's Instruction to Angels Regarding the Son, v. 6
 - D. It Records Prayers to the Son, vv. 10-12

Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, we looked last week at how Jesus Christ is superior to angels. God spoke through angels, but they are mere servants, while Christ is the Son who rules over them. Scripture, we saw, is God's speech, and the Hebrew writer mines Scripture as a source of instruction for us about the relative place of angels and the Son of God. Not only is there a great deal to learn from what these Scriptures say (the surface of which we tried to scratch last week); there is also much to learn from how the writer deploys them in service of his argument. We are going to look at some of the premises from which he reasons, expressed and implied, in our sermon today. We will see that Scripture is God's speech, that in a very real sense it is God's complete speech, that it applies in Heaven as well as on earth, and that — above all — it is about Christ.

I. Scripture Is God's Speech

The first thing I want to point out to you this morning is how the Hebrew writer quotes Scripture. Rather than "As it is written", which Paul likes to use, or "thus was fulfilled," as Matthew says, this author never speaks of Scripture as "written" or "fulfilled." (He does use "written" in a quote from Psalm 40.) Instead, notice with me how he speaks. "For to which of the angels did He ever say" (Heb 1:5 NAS); "when He again brings the first-born into the world, He says" (Heb 1:6 NAS); "And of the angels He says" (Heb 1:7 NAS) — and so on. It runs this way right through the book, too. "One has testified somewhere, saying . . ." (Heb 2:6 NAS). The point is clear: Scripture is the speech of God. The writer makes this abundantly clear by saying "just as the Holy Spirit says" (Heb 3:7 NAS) and then proceeding to quote Psalm 95. Now, Psalm 95 is

clearly a human prayer — “O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our maker.” As we pointed out last week, the Holy Spirit cannot directly speak of Yahweh as His own “maker,” nor does He worship God, for He is God. But our writer, just like Christ Himself, does not let these details bother him. For Christ and for the Hebrew writer, and for all the NT authors, “Scripture says” and “God says” are completely interchangeable. Scripture is the speech of God. Obviously, the writer knows that this speech has been written down, but what someone says in writing and what He says audibly are equivalent.

Now, I want you to think about that. You’ve heard, I’m sure, Paul’s statement in 2 Timothy that all Scripture is “breathed out by God,” or “inspired by God” in the older translation. This first chapter of Hebrews, and indeed the rest of the book, shows what you do when you actually believe that Scripture is God’s speech. You take what is written, you perform the necessary changes of person and application to figure out what is true about God, and you grow in your ability to love, serve, know and worship. We are used to this; indeed, we are made for this. We change person all the time. When my friend says “You’re a good friend” I think “I’m a good friend.” I can mentally switch the vantage point from where he is to where I am with little effort, because that’s what we do as social creatures. In the same way, we hear the psalmist urging the angels to worship God and we say “That’s right; the Psalmist commanded the angels to worship and therefore God has, in an important sense, told them to worship Him because the Psalmist was speaking on God’s behalf.”

Pentecostal Christians love prophets and apostles because they love the living voice of God. They want to hear now, today, from their Father — not what He said, but what He’s saying. Hebrews speaks to them, and to us, and says “Scripture *is* the living voice of God, telling us not just what He said but what He’s saying.” Do you want to know what God has to say? Open the book and read it. Listen to the preaching of it. You will hear God’s word to you. You can interview the Almighty on any topic just by familiarizing yourself with what He has said and then finding the places in the book where He addresses your topic directly or by implication.

II. Scripture Is God’s Complete Speech, vv. 5, 13

But that’s not all. Oh, far from it! Scripture is not “merely” God’s speech, though that in itself is sublime and transcendent. Scripture is also God’s *complete* speech. We typically use the synonym “sufficient” to describe this aspect of the Bible, but either way, I want you to look at the form of the question: “To which of the angels did God ever say?”

Now, you and I should maybe be thinking “How should I know what God and the angels have talked about in the throne room for the last umpteen centuries?” But that’s not your first thought, is it, when you hear the question? No. Instead, if you’re as familiar with the Bible as you ought to be, you are thinking “I said, you are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High,” from Psalm 82:6. If you’re thinking of that text, you further realize that it is the only place in the Bible where God addresses the angels as “sons” and even there, it is the plural rather than the singular “Son.” He has never said to a particular angel, “Thou art my Son,” but only to the angels in general, or at most to the angels of the divine council, “You are sons of the Most High.” Other than that, Scripture does not record any time when God used the “son” language in speaking to

an angel. And the Hebrew writer takes that and runs with it. He has absolutely no compunction about arguing from the silence of Scripture. In his mind, Scripture is a sufficiently complete record of what God has said and done that we can confidently affirm that He has not done things that Scripture does not record Him doing — particularly in areas where His actions are described at greater length. Thus, for instance, we could say “On what other planet did the LORD God form a being from the dust of the ground and breathe into his nostrils the breath of life? The Bible never talks about extraterrestrials and therefore there is no physical life on other planets.” I don’t think we can safely affirm that. But we can safely affirm that the Son is exalted to the highest place in Heaven, and that no creature, angel or man or animal, has ever been or will ever be exalted to the same level.

What does the sufficiency of Scripture mean? That we can hunt through it for evidence about aliens and computer chip design? No. It means that whatever we need for life and godliness is here. Everything relevant to our walk with Christ is contained in Scripture. The book is enough to equip you and me for every good work. There is no good work for which Scripture leaves us unprepared and underequipped.

If Scripture is sufficient, that means we do not need an infallible institution to tell us what we *really* need to know about God. If Scripture is sufficient, that means we do not need a contemporary prophet or apostle to give us further revelation. If Scripture is sufficient, we do not need psychology and whatever the world’s latest moral craze is to tell us how to live upright and godly lives. If Scripture is sufficient, we need to know, believe, apply, and obey Scripture in order to live an upright life that is well-pleasing to the LORD.

III. Scripture Applies in Heaven as Well as on Earth, v. 6a

The third thing I want to observe about this series of seven quotations is that Scripture applies in Heaven as well as on earth. Psalm 97 called on the gods to worship Yahweh. This is a psalm written and sung in worship on the earth, but it is addressed to heavenly beings — the gods. How does Scripture apply in heaven? Because it is about heavenly realities, above all the Triune God and His works of creation and providence. What it says about heavenly realities applies to them in Heaven. It is as true there as it is on earth. Sometimes you read the travel guide for a place like Afghanistan, and then you get there and see that the travel guide and conditions on the ground are two different things. But you will never read Scripture, then get to Heaven and find that Heaven is a different thing than the guidebook (God’s word) described.

IV. Scripture Is About Christ

Finally, and most importantly, Scripture is about Christ. This is the basic interpretive grid of the NT writers, and of course Luke tells us directly that Jesus expounded in Moses and all the prophets the things concerning Himself. The Pentateuch and the Prophets are about Jesus.

Hold up, says the historical-critical method. The human authors of the OT could not have known about Jesus and so say what you want about the OT, it is not about Him.

To this, we have a simple answer: The New Testament disagrees. If you say you are a New Testament Christian, then you have to either believe that the OT is about Christ or you have

to believe that the NT doesn't know what it's talking about. If the NT doesn't know what it's talking about, then your faith is vain and you are still in your sins.

In what ways is the OT about Christ? This chapter points out at least four of them.

A. It Records Dialogue Between the Father and the Son, vv. 5a, 8-9, 13

First of all, and most prominently here, the OT records dialogue between the Father and the Son. The OT is about Christ because it literally quotes Him talking about Himself and talking to His Father. It also records non-verbal interactions between Him and His Father.

1. Psalm 2

Psalm 2 is a dramatic poem, literally: It has several speakers come forward and state their piece. The nations speak, Yahweh speaks, the Son speaks, and, it seems, the narrator speaks (though there is no real reason why the whole Psalm can't be narrated by the Son). In this Psalm, the Son of God describes what the Father said to Him. Take that, historical-critical method. The historical-critical method starts from the premise that this poem was written by a human being, not by God. That human being knew no more about God than you and I do. In other words, he was *making it up*. So says the historical-critical method. But Psalm 2 says differently. Hebrews says differently. The Father really did speak to the Son and promise Him the nations and kingdoms of the earth.

2. Psalm 45

Meanwhile, Psalm 45 is a prayer or song addressed to God the Son that describes the Father as "God, your God." Again, God the Father is not the one addressed as God; it is His Son, who calls Him "my God."

3. Psalm 110

And finally, in Psalm 110 David records dialogue between Yahweh and the one David calls "my Lord." Who is this one? He is the one who sits at the right hand of the Father, on His throne — something that clearly never happened to an angel. Most of the psalm is addressed to the Son, but it describes two different things that the Father said to the Son.

In short, if these psalms are not about Jesus, then the Gospel of Matthew is not about Jesus.

B. It Records Prophetic Oracles from the Father about the Son, v. 5b

The second way in which the OT is about Jesus is that it records prophetic oracles in which the Father speaks, and speaks regarding His promises to His Son. Foremost among these is the great Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7, in which God promises to build David a house and to raise up a particular seed who will be the great temple-builder, constructing a house for Yahweh's name. This Davidic Covenant is not just about David, Solomon, and the 14 generations or so of rulers in Judah who followed them. It is above all about Jesus Christ, Davidson, temple-builder *par excellence*. These promises are, on their face, about David's son. Which one? Solomon received portions of some of them as a type, but only Christ, as antitype, receives them all.

C. It Records the Father's Instruction to Angels Regarding the Son, v. 6

The OT is also about Christ in that it records the Father's instructions to angels about Him. "Let all the angels of God worship Him." Who? Oh, just someone the OT never mentions. Not. The

OT very definitely mentions Him. He is the one whom all beings in the cosmos, human and angelic, are called upon to worship.

D. It Records Prayers to the Son, vv. 10-12

And finally, the OT records prayers to the Son as the restorer of Israel. Psalm 102 is one of these prayers. When you are afflicted and faint, your heavenly Father is ready to help you. And His Son is also ready to help you — and He is the restorer of Israel, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Do you want to know Jesus? Read Moses, because he wrote about Christ.

Brothers and sisters, this first chapter of Hebrews makes it very clear that the Psalms are about Jesus. A sermon that is from the Bible needs to be about Jesus. A Christian needs to be about Christ. If you say many helpful things but don't point to Him, you are off track. The Hebrew writer gets us back on track. It's about Jesus — not just the text, but the world too is about Him. Don't forget it. Amen.