

Title: God spoke and...  
Text: Hebrews 1.1-4  
Theme: The prophets prepared the way for the Son  
Series: Advent #1, 2017 – The Prophet Sunday  
Prop Stmtnt: When God speaks, you need to listen.

God “came down” and through a leader, he delivered his people that he had chosen from bondage and led them out of captivity in Egypt. The night before they were delivered was the night of the Passover. From that event and around that event the Jewish calendar was established. But that deliverance which was and has been celebrated was a temporary and physical deliverance. Most of the hundreds of thousands who were delivered from slavery, were not delivered spiritually. Most of Israel who saw the power of God in the plagues and the Red Sea deliverance, in manna daily, still died in rebellion and were buried in the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

The Passover, which delivered them as a people and led to their formation as a nation was to be celebrated and for 3,500 years, it has been. But, that Passover event pointed to a greater deliverance. 2,000 years ago, God came down and through a leader he delivered his people that he had chosen from bondage and led them out of captivity to sin and called them to form the church. Therefore, if it was fitting for Israel to celebrate the Passover (and it was) which pointed to and is fulfilled in Christ, how much more fitting is it for us to celebrate the coming of Christ! The entrance of Christ into the world, the incarnation, God becoming man is big. This is colossal and should be celebrated as such.

In all your festivities and celebrations, rejoice in Christ! Make much of Christ! Enjoy Christ and all that he has done. And in order to prepare us for this wonderful celebration, years ago, we began to use a modified version of what is called “the church calendar” as it relates to the coming (or advent) of Christ. Simply called Advent, we celebrate the various stages at which God has sent light into the world, which prepared the way for the Light itself, which is Christ. Today, therefore is the Prophets Sunday, in which we remember that God spoke to the prophets in order to prepare them for the coming of Christ. This is followed by the Angels Sunday, the Shepherds Sunday, the Wise Men Sunday and then Christmas Eve, which, this year is on a Sunday, when we celebrate how all of these revelations were the occasions for more light that culminated in Christ himself coming into the world. And, we know that this is huge! And it is gloriously huge and therefore, it should not surprise us at all, that since creation, God planned and prepared for the advent of Christ into the world.

Read Text:

The point of the text is clear. The AH is comparing the previous revelation of God to the prophets with the ultimate revelation of God in Christ. If what they said, came true, then we really need to pay attention to what Christ said. If what they were, pointed to Christ, then we really need to pay attention to who Christ is. If everything they did was God’s plan to prepare the world for the coming of his Son, and since Christ came and said that

he is coming back, then we need to get on our tiptoes and look, and plan and prepare for the coming, not of another Christmas, but of Christ himself.

## I. What did we learn from the prophets?

*Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets*

How many times do people ask kids, “hey, what did you learn in school today?” “What did you learn at church today?” Ok, to every kid in here this morning, here is the short answer to that question: When God speaks, you need to listen. The fact that the prophets spoke, means that at the very least we formally learned that God is.

Now, if you are investigating Christianity, you might wonder what a prophet is. Simply put, a prophet is a person who speaks God’s words to others. The history of Israel from her beginnings in Egypt up until the coming of Christ, is the history of prophets. The book of Hebrews restates this: Long ago at many times and in many ways, God spoke. The fact that there were men, who did not ask for this job, but were drafted by God for this job and then told what to say, means that...

### A. God is

The truth is, everyone knows that God exists. The fingerprint of the Creator is on every one of us. There are some who work really hard in an effort to deny that he exists, but everyone knows he does. The reason why some work so hard to deny that he exists is because their knowledge of God is a painful knowledge due to the guilt they feel, or due to their sense of dread because they have a sense of judgment or accountability and they don’t like that. Mankind’s intuitive awareness of the reality of God is not a comfort; it is terrifying, because that means that we are accountable.

Years ago, Tom Hanks starred in a movie called *Cast Away*, in which he played a character who found himself on an island all by himself. His only companion was a volleyball that he pretended was his friend. It was sad. But, imagine that is you. And one day you are exploring the island and you discover footprints and you realize – you are not alone. Is that a comfort or is that scary? The universe has the fingerprints of God all over it. And the fact that we each live with a sense of guilt because of our personal sins, means that mankind responds to the evidence of the supernatural with fear.

When you study the history of religion, it is a study of angry gods. For example, the ancient religion system in Hawaii was called *Kapu*, which is generally translated “forbidden.” Men were forbidden to eat with women. Women were forbidden to eat bananas, coconuts and certain types of pork. Funny how this worked, right? If a woman dared to eat something *kapu*, then the gods would kill her, at least that is what was thought, meaning that is what the men said, who liked the bananas, coconuts and pork. The idea of the gods being angry is consistent throughout the world because mankind knows intuitively the existence of the supernatural, but left to himself he assumes things about God that are not true, and he comes up with own system of belief. So, the fact that

long ago and many ways, God spoke is glorious! It is glorious because it not only confirms what we know intuitively that God exists, but God reveals things about himself.

### **B. God wants to be known.**

The fact that the prophets spoke not only is evidence that God exists, but God is not playing hide and seek with us. My grandson is 3 and I've been trying to teach him how to play hide and seek. He's pretty good and coming and looking for me, but he just hasn't got the hiding part down too well. He'll hide for about 3 seconds and then you hear him, "he-he-he...he-he-he." He doesn't want to hide. He wants to be found. That is like God. He spoke to the prophets because he wants to be known, and one of the most important things you could learn is that...

### **C. There is no other.**

Over and over God told the prophets that there is no other god, meaning that all of the other gods are figments of imagination. They do not really exist. They appear to have power because either that is how people choose to interpret events, or, in many cases, demons are heavily involved in the worship culture of idols, but the fact that God has spoken and has told us that there are no other gods is so good because we do not have to fear any other god.

For example, in the Hindu religion, there are 330 million gods. No one has a list of all of them. No one even knows their names. Imagine that. If you don't even know their names, then of course you do not know who they are, where they are, what they are doing, and most importantly, what gets them ticked off. If there are 330 million gods, then there has to be a very high probability that one of them is angry at right handed people, because it is left-handed. And every time you use your right hand, you are angering this god who is about to thump you with his left fist – right? What kind of comfort can you find in a religion where you do not know and cannot know all of the gods?

Seriously, the fact that God has spoken means that he has revealed himself and has revealed things about himself. And one of the most impactful things that God did by speaking through the prophets was to go on record and make specific predictions about the future. These revelations authenticated the messenger and the message. Let me explain that for a minute. Prophets were not only messengers of God, in that they spoke forth the Word of God, but they were also the mouthpieces that God used to go on record and make very specific predictions about the future.

Now, if you have any background in biology, you know that DNA has changed the game in so many ways, particularly in forensics. When forensic scientists find a DNA profile match, then the odds of identifying the wrong person is less than one in several billion. Because the odds are so infinitesimally small, a DNA match is game over evidence. There is no more argument.

Now, the Old Testament prophets made 61 specific prophecies about the coming of Christ. One mathematics professor, Peter Stoner, gave 600 students a math probability problem, by asking them to figure out, what are the odds of any one person fulfilling 8 specific prophecies. So, Micah says that the Messiah is going to be born in Bethlehem. Isaiah says that the Messiah is going to be born of a virgin. Those are just two. What are the odds of one guy being born of a virgin in Bethlehem, plus 6 more? Well, the students figured that the odds of one person fulfilling 8 prophecies would be 1 in 10, to the 21<sup>st</sup> power. (ten, with 21 zeroes)

10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000

Here is what this means. Cover the earth with silver dollars 120 feet high, with one of them marked with a red X and bury it some where. Then blindfold a person and have them pick one coin from all of those silver dollars. The odds of that person, while blindfolded, picking the one coin from the trillions upon trillions, is the same odds of one person fulfilling 8 prophecies, and Christ fulfilled all 61.<sup>1</sup> The problem is not the lack of information, or the credibility of the information. God is on record and the record is convincing because

#### **D. God is to be believed.**

But, herein lies the problem. In our natural condition, as much as we need God and left to ourselves create angry gods, we do not want to believe in the one true God and therefore resist his revelation.

For example, around 740B.C. Ahaz was king of Judah. Rezin was the king of Syria and Pekah was the king of Israel (N. kingdom). Assyria was like Mordor and was taking over the world. Syria and Israel figured that their only hope in defeating Assyria was to form an alliance and they demanded that Ahaz join them. It was like the ancient version of a gang. Either you join us or we will kill you. So, Ahaz has a problem. If he joins them, then he is formally identifying himself as an enemy of Assyria. If he doesn't, then these two neighboring countries are going to attack him. When Ahaz realized that these two enemies had joined forces and were coming after him, the Bible says that "*the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.*" (Isaiah 7.2b) Ahaz is terrified and so are his people. So, God sends Isaiah the prophet to go to Ahaz and to assure him that this brand new threat is not going to amount to anything.

That is revelation! God has gone on record and says definitively, here is what is going to happen. Then God, through the prophet says, "Ask me for a sign." Make it big! It can be as high as the heavens or as low as hell. Ask me for a sign because I am willing to give you colossal supernatural evidence that this message that I just gave you is worthy of belief. I am telling you that this message is worthy of you staking your life on it and I will give you a sign to prove it.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://y-jesus.com/what-are-the-odds/>

And what does Ahaz do? He says, “Oh no, I would never want to test God like that.” As if God cannot see through his pretense of humility?! The reason that he did not want a sign is because he did not want to believe. When these prophets like Moses, Elijah, Elisha and Daniel not only were mouthpieces of God, but also performed miracles, the combination of message and miracle was incontrovertible evidence of the existence, authority and Sovereignty of God. Most people chafe at that. Like Ahaz they do not want a sign from God, because then they have to admit it. So Ahaz said no, he did not want a sign. So, God said I’m giving you one anyway. “*Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel.*”

This pattern is repeated for over 1,000 years. God speaks through his prophets. He reveals himself to yet another generation with evidence that he is, that there is no other and that he is to be believed. And sadly, the response was generally the same. We covered our eyes and ears. We did not want to know because then we would have to make some changes and we didn’t want that.

The prophets themselves were a preview of Christ, even as their messages of promise kept speaking of the Messiah who would come. Over and over God went on record promising that he was going to send the Messiah to Israel, but this Messiah was more than for Israel, this Messiah was for the world. And now the stakes are very high.

## II. What did we learn from Jesus?

*but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son*

### A. God is

The prophets spoke on behalf of God, but Christ spoke as God. Everything that he said was true, profound and revealing. The reality of Christ, the incarnation, the fact that God invaded this world is absolutely, proof positive that there is a God. The reality of Christ ought to change the way we look at things.

I was on a long flight sitting next to a university professor and I was asking her about what she taught and we ended up talking for a very long time and in the course of the conversation she asked me how I explain God to you, or even defend God when there are so many evil things that happen in this world? I figured that she was asking for herself because she said that she doesn’t know how to reconcile the fact of God with the reality of evil. I will spare you the entire conversation since the flight was 8 hours long, but the salient point I was able to share with her was Christ. I told her, that her question, while it is very understandable as to why she would ask it, is not really difficult to answer. We tend to struggle with what appears to us to be unfair, but Christ gives us a new lens to look through.

The greatest injustice that has ever taken place was not the Holocaust, the shooting in Las Vegas, Sutherland Springs, the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, etc. The greatest injustice that

has ever taken place took place at the cross, when the perfectly innocent Son of God, laid down his life on a cross and was barbarically, graphically and horrendously tortured to death because he accepted the credit upon himself for the sins of every person who would ever believe in him and he chose to be treated as if he had committed every one of those sins. There is no greater injustice than that. That is absolutely unfair. What else is unfair is the fact that I, a rebel against God have been sustained these many years with life. Fairness is not the absence of violence, but the presence of God's awesome judgment. I am not the recipient of God's judgment because Christ took my place. Jesus is the ultimate Prophet who delivered the ultimate message because he was not only the perfect messenger, he was the message. His life revealed that God is! And,

**B. He wants to be known.**

The story of Christ is the story of One who went to where the people were. He taught. He called men to follow him. He talked in ways that common people could understand. He lived with us. He came to us and when he came to us, he did not "put in his time." He came to be with us. He is Immanuel, God with us. And Christ did that. He was with us because he wants to be known. Even after his resurrection he told Thomas to come and touch him. Look at my scars. Feel my side, where the spear went it. His entire life was real. God wants to be known.

**C. There is no other (God and no other Savior)**

This means that there is no other Savior. This coming year we are going to do a concentrated study in the book of Judges and it is going to be at times a very frustrating study because we are going study the life of an addict. The addict is the nation of Israel and the drug is Baal and other gods. In spite of how destructive idol worship is, the nation of Israel keeps going back to it over and over and over. The message of the judges and the story of the book that bears that name is the same as the message of the prophets. Only God can save you. These idols do not exist. Therefore, they cannot save you. All of that points to the day of Christ. Only Christ can save you. He is and he stands alone. No one cares for you like him. No one loves you like him. No one is perfect like him. No one can actually die for sins like him. No one can save you from your sin. You cannot save you from your sin, you are the problem. We cannot rescue ourselves. If you are drowning, you need to be rescued. If you are full of infection and you need surgery to get rid of the infection, you cannot operate on yourself with infected hands and expect to get rid of the infection. You need to be rescued by one who does not need to be rescued and only Christ qualifies for that.

The prophets made amazing promises on behalf of God, but Christ made the ultimate promise when he promised that after he died that he would rise again. Therefore,

**D. God is to be believed.**

And that is the point of Christmas. God has spoken in the perfect revelation of his Son who has made us know who God is. Our God is. Our God wants to be known. Our God is

to be believed. And because our God gave up his life on the cross, our God is to be loved, adored, cherished, treasured and enjoyed. This season, is truly a season of joy, because no matter what good news you might be enjoying or what sorrow you might be bearing, the coming of Christ resulted in the securing of a salvation that will outshine all other glories and drown out all other griefs.

If you have not yet come to faith in Christ – what would be a good take-away for you?

- It really is worth investigating if all of this stuff in the Bible can really just be made up? Can you dismiss it on the basis of happenstance, coincidence and fluke? If not, then are you willing to examine what God says about you and your life with him?

If you are a believer and struggling – what would be a good take-away for you?

- Chances are you are struggling with an area of surrender (which is generally an issue of faith). Is God believable? Yes! Is God worthy of belief?

If you are a believer and confident in God's promises, then how does your life point to Christ? That was the job of the prophets. One of the take-aways from my study this week is simply this. I want to relate to people in such a way that after being with me, they want to love Jesus more. That will only happen as I love him more.