

READ Psalm 139:1-18

I wanted to begin in this text this morning because I want our minds to be impressed with just how transcendent our God is. I want us to be impressed by just how extraordinary, beyond, and above God is compared to ourselves. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He sees every single thing we do now and was even aware of us before we came to be as we are now. His thoughts and ways are such that we simply cannot even begin to comprehend them fully.

While these truths of God ought to move us to revere Him in the highest and greatest sense of the word, we must also acknowledge that this creates a bit of a problem for us as we consider our goal this year of seeking to know God. How can such finite, weak, and limited beings possibly come to know such an infinite, powerful, and limitless God? We certainly are left in a bit of a conundrum because it seems so paradoxical that the transcendent God would be willing to interact and be involved with beings such as ourselves, but I believe that His doing such is simply an expression of how much He loves us and desires for relationship with us. So how has God gone about doing such a thing? How has a transcendent God interacted with mankind so as to be known and experienced? Are we supposed to have some super spiritual moment?

The earliest pages of Scripture reveal that there was a point where God was extremely up close and personal in His interactions with mankind. The picture painted from **Genesis 1-3** is of God even walking among His creation in the Garden of Eden (**Genesis 3:8**). Even following the expulsion from the Garden, certain men within the Bible story continued to have very personal relationships with God. Noah and Abraham would best exemplify this truth, but this interaction between God and mankind seems to change with the beginning of the Exodus story and the introduction of Moses into the Bible story. It is from this point on that I want to begin thinking in a more in-depth way as to how we are able to experience God, and a great text to work from to understand these truths is **Hebrews 1:1-3** where the Hebrew writer details how it is that a transcendent God has spoken and interacted with men so as to be known and experienced by them. ***Read Hebrews 1:1-3***

The Hebrew writer begins by stating that the ancient Hebrew fathers were spoken to by God and experienced God through the means of prophets. These men served as the mediators by which God's people could know Him, know His will, and even experience His character in various ways. Yet, these men, these mediators were all pointing towards the ultimate Mediator which was to come...Jesus. This morning we are going to focus on two specific mediators in Moses and David, along with the priests of the Law, to see how their roles as mediators between God and His people were crucial in bringing about the Messiah who would serve the ultimate role of Mediator between God and His people so He might be known and experienced in the greatest possible way.

How A Transcendent God Interacts With Mankind (Hebrews 1:1-3)

A. God's Use Of Human Mediators (Hebrews 1:1)

1. Moses

- a) A truly integral figure in God's use of human mediators is Moses. The story of his working together with God for the accomplishing of the divine will begins back in **Exodus 3** when God introduces Himself, His desires, and His plans for Moses through the burning bush. What I want us to focus on the how the language of what takes place in this text and the following texts almost leaves us wondering who exactly it is that is working to accomplish the Lord's desires of bringing His people out of Egypt, establishing a covenant with them, and planting them firmly within the Promised Land of Canaan.

- b) **Exodus 3:7-12** The text begins with the Lord using strong language of what He has heard and what He will do. However, the language suddenly changes in **v.10** when the Lord tells Moses that he will be the one who will go to Pharaoh and lead Israel out of Egypt. So which is it? Will God be doing this or will Moses be doing this? The answer is "yes." It will be God working through Moses as a mediator which will lead to His will be accomplished. This might lead us to ask the question, "Why?" Why doesn't God simply do the delivering by Himself? The best answer I can give is that God desires to partner with His creation of mankind, the imagers of Himself, in the accomplishing of His will. He desires and allows us to participate in carrying out His plans for mankind which will most certainly allow us the opportunity to most greatly reflect the image of Him within our own lives. Thus we get God saying He is going to act and then telling Moses that he will be the one acting as His mediator.
- c) This theme of Moses carrying out what God says He is going to do continues throughout nearly the entire narrative of the Exodus. Notice these following examples that show up throughout the following chapters:
- (1) **Exodus 5:1** As Moses goes before Pharaoh and speaks from the divine first person perspective. *"This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says: Let My people go, so that they may hold a festival for Me in the wilderness."*
 - (2) **Exodus 6:1 & 7:4,15,19** The Lord tells Moses that he would see what He would do to force Pharaoh's hand in letting Israel go even to the extreme of driving them from the land. The determining factor would be God's strong hand. The Lord reiterates that this will happen in **7:4**, but let's notice whose hands are actually seen being used in **7:15,19**. God tells Moses that it would be his hand and the hand of Aaron that would literally be raised against Egypt, and this is consistently seen through the plagues done in Egypt.
 - (3) **Exodus 14:15-22** This continues to be true once we get past the plagues and into the actual Exodus journey. The crossing of the Red Sea is a well-known staple even in this chapter of Israel's history, but I want us to again note the language that is used to see who it is that is putting work in to accomplish this great task. **14:15-22** shows us that it is again Moses's hands that are raised to part the sea, but he was only able to do so through the strength that God was providing (**v.21**). As God's prophet, Moses was able to part that water because the Lord was acting as his source of power, and the relationship and partnership established, maintained, and strengthened between the two only continued to grow.
 - (4) **Exodus 32:7-14** Following the disaster that was the creating of the golden calf at the foot of Mt. Sinai, God tells Moses that he needed to go down to handle his people that he had brought up out of Egypt. But hold on...I thought it was God who brought them out? Again, the answer is "yes." God was working through Moses to accomplish His will, but Moses was also able to participate in this partnership by persuading God against destroying His people and restarting with Moses.
 - (5) **Exodus 33** Moses is again seen interceding for Israel in the next chapter as the Lord is fed-up with the people and not wanting to go before them on their journey to the land. We see Moses's service and working for/with the Lord being a major factor in him finding favor with the Lord which ultimate leads to him being able to see at least a portion of the Lord's true glory from behind a rock.
 - (6) **Exodus 34:29ff** What does all of this culminate in? This intimate partnership between God and Moses results in his face shining to the point of others being worried!

2. David

- a) Moses well represents the category of prophets who served as mediators who partnered with God in the carrying out of His will, and David would serve well as the man who represents the kings of God's people who He would partner with in leading His people of Israel. Focusing just on one aspect of David's time as king, I want to turn our attention towards what is said in **II Samuel 8:1-15** where David's incredible achievements of war are listed. Yet, let's consider what is mentioned twice within the text concerning the Lord making David victorious wherever he went (**vv.6,14**).
- b) God was partnering with David in bringing about these great victories, and these victories certainly allowed for David to have great influence over his people which resulted in him being able to bring justice and righteousness to all of his people (**v.15**). This was God's desire for all of those who served as king over Israel. They were to reflect God's character by making sure that justice and righteousness were upheld among His people. Surely we understand that such should have actually been expected from the man who is described as being after God's own heart (**I Samuel 13:14 & Acts 13:22**). This partnership and God's use of David as a mediator between Him and His people certainly brought great results!

3. Priests

- a) The men who served as priests to carry out the Law of God were also extremely important in playing the role of mediator between the people of Israel and God. They served as those who would offer various sacrifices on behalf of the people as is detailed in **Leviticus 1-7** and reiterated in **Hebrews 5:1** specifically concerning the high priest, *"For every high priest taken from among men is appointed in matters pertaining to God for the people, to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins."*
- b) If anyone served in a role that defined mediation, it would certainly be this group of individuals who served as those who helped to re-establish fellowship between God and men through offering sacrifices for the forgiveness of man's sin, and being the teachers of the Law. This was a vitally important and extremely honorable role for those men to play.

4. Isaiah's Expectation of a Prophet, Priest, & King

- a) These roles being played by various men over the centuries must certainly lead us to the conclusion that God desires to partner with mankind in the fulfilling of His will. What a blessing it must have been to be able to serve as God's mediator in these various ways to His people & intimately participate in this plans! However, I want us to recognize that such a role didn't preclude the participant from allowing their human weaknesses to be seen. In fact, the flaws of these individuals are on full display in Scripture. Moses lost his proper perspective of his role for a moment and it kept him from entering Canaan (**Numbers 20**). David was a man who was at one point guilty of adultery and murder (**II Samuel 11**). The priests were required to make sure they themselves were purified before they made atonement for the people. This was true at the inauguration of the Aaronic priesthood (**Leviticus 9**), and it continued to be true from then on throughout the duration of the Law (**Hebrews 9:1-10**). In fact, Isaiah states that those who served as mediators for Israel are all guilty of rebellion against God which eventually led to Israel's destruction (**Isaiah 43:27**).
- b) Therefore, none of these individuals who served either as a prophet, priest, or king were able to live up to the lofty expectations of perfectly refined character as God's used them as mediators and participants in His plans. However, that didn't stop Isaiah from looking forward to that one person who would be able to meet God's high expectations and bring about a great restorative act towards mankind.

- (1) **Isaiah 2** The language of this text must surely get us thinking in terms of the temple and a priesthood. The priest were responsible for teaching the Law about the ways of God and instructing the people in His ways. Isaiah is looking forward to a day when the Lord would establish a means of mediation between the nations and peoples that would be done in an incomparable way with the result being peace among mankind.
 - (2) **Isaiah 11** Isaiah is also looking forward to a king who would come from the line of Jesse which is Davidic language signifying this king as one following His lineage in numerous respects. Not only would this king be a descendent of David, but this king would also usher in great times of restoration for those He would rule.
 - (3) **Isaiah 63:7-14** Finally at the end of Isaiah's writings, we read of the prophet looking back at God's grace upon His people and anticipating a time when such grace would return. Notice the person of remembrance is that of Moses, and the prophet looks forward to God once again partnering with a prophet mediator to bring about another great moment of restoration for His people.
- c) The question we are left with when considering this hopeful future in Isaiah's mind...who is going to be the person who is able to serve in this superior mediating role?

B. Jesus perfectly fulfills the role of mediator between God & men as the one man who has perfectly displayed the character of God in His person. (Hebrews 1:2,3)

1. I believe the Hebrew writer answers this question for us in these first three verses of Hebrews. Though God spoke and partnered with the prophets and other mediators at numerous points in times past, He now has spoken in a final way through One man who is Jesus the Christ, the Son of God. It is abundantly clear that the Hebrew writers wants to impress upon the reader the superior nature of Jesus serving in this role above all others. Consider:
 - (1) *"God has appointed Him heir of all things"* Whereas God's human mediators up to this point had simply partnered with God in the carrying out of his will, it is said of Jesus that He is the actual heir of all things as confirmed by God. All rule and authority over the creation and nations (**Psalm 2:8**) had been given unto Him in a way that was incomparable to any mediator who came before Him.
 - (2) *"made the universe through Him"* To have rule and authority over the creation and nations only makes sense since Jesus was a part of the creation process in the very beginning as is attested elsewhere in the New Testament, specifically **John 1:1-5**.
 - (3) *"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of His nature"* This is really where the differences between any former mediators and Jesus the mediator lies. Those other men were simply image-bearers of God who were still flawed in their character, but this cannot be stated concerning Jesus. He is the man who can perfectly serve as prophet, priest, and king because He is the very essence of who God is at all times. While Moses's face only literally shone for a short time, the glory of God continually radiated from Jesus at all times. He perfectly displayed God's character at all times because He was God in the flesh. He was the standard for God's expectations for mankind as people created in His image.
 - (4) *"After making purification for sins..."* It was this perfect display of holy and righteous character that allowed for Him to be offered up as a once-for-all perfect sacrifice for the sins of mankind which simply wasn't available previously.
2. These incredible attributes as listed here by themselves show Jesus to be superior to any mediator, prophet, priest, or king who can come previously, but it shouldn't have surprised any Jew familiar with Isaiah's writings to know that this would be form in which God's

promised Messiah would take. **Isaiah 52:13-53:12** clearly speak of a God's Servant who would mediate for Him to the benefit of the spiritual rebellious who were in need of redemption. Who could fulfill such a role? It was take a super special and incomparable human, and certainly no human could compare to God Himself coming in the flesh.

From this text, we come to know about God:

1. God has primarily used human mediators (even though flawed) as His means of interacting with mankind.

- a) Mankind, as a whole over time, have been able to experience God through the mediation offered by various men, in various roles, in various times and places. God has done such to show us, through these men, His expectations for mankind through the character & example of these people. There is a reason we look up to men like Moses and David in so many ways!
- b) They were men of great character who have taught us much, but they still fell short of God's lofty expectations at times. This causes us then to continue to look for that perfect example of a person without flaws or weaknesses that shows us exactly how life ought to be done!

2. These flawed mediators pointed towards the perfect human, Jesus the Son of God, through whom God would speak & lead men back to Himself.

- a) Thankfully, we have no need to look any further than Jesus. Let's remember from this text that He is the very radiance and expression of God's glory. He is the essence of who God is, and He has set the perfect example for how we ought to carry ourselves as humans. He is without a doubt the person to look to if we want to know God and experience what it is like to live as He would have us to live.
- b) This is why John records what he does in **John 14:1-14**. Philip wants so much for Jesus to simply show them the Father. They have undoubtedly recognized Jesus's incredible relationship with the Father, and they know based upon what they had seen already and what Jesus has just said (**vv.6,7**) that He is the quickest and most direct pathway to God. Yet, Jesus wants them to know that they have been witness to the Father through witnessing Jesus and everything He has done. If they want to truly experience the Father then they could do so by imitating what Jesus has done. To experience the glory of God is to live as He would have us live which to reflect His character in all that we do!

Main Point/Conclusion: *We can only truly experience God by knowing Jesus & seeking to display His holy & righteous character in our own lives.*

So many people wonder through life looking for this spiritual experience or that spiritual experience which might cause them to feel as if they are closer to God than every before, but looking and longing for such an experience is a waste of time when Jesus and His example to emulate is right before us! If we want to know God then we need to look no further than our Great Mediator Jesus who has shown us the way to God through holy and righteous living. We can not only know God, but we can also experience Him and His desire for our lives by living as His Son lived so that we might also die as He did, and be raised to new life as He did, also.