

"The Superiority of Jesus Christ over the Prophets"

Hebrews 1:1-3

Part 2

Introduction: Tonight as we come back to our study of the book of Hebrews we are stepping into 1:1-3 again. I need to remind you that this letter was written to Jewish believers who were struggling with separation from Judaism. There was great pressure upon them from the Jewish community. Because of their faith in Jesus Christ they were not allowed to enter the temple; they were banished from the altar, the sacrifice, the high priest, and the house of Jehovah. They were treated worse than the Gentiles for they were cut off from the commonwealth of Israel. These believers were trying to straddle the fence in the sense that they were trying to hold on to the sacrificial system and at the same time walk in their new life in Christ. This letter was written to encourage them to separate from the Old Covenant because the New Covenant was much better.

This entire letter is written for the purpose of showing these believers that Jesus Christ is better. The writer will show that Jesus is better than the prophets, He is better than the angels, He is better than Moses, He is better than Joshua, He is better than Aaron, He is better than Judaism, He is better than anything of the Old Covenant.

Now last week I told you that we cannot be sure who wrote the letter because the writer never identifies himself. Therefore we shall refer to him as "the writer".

Last week we started into the first three verses of chapter one and in this section the writer takes us directly into the meat of the book. In

the first three verses the writer is setting forth a contrast between the Old Testament prophets and Jesus Christ. It is the writer's desire to show his readers that Jesus Christ is superior to the Old Testament prophets.

Notice Hebrews 1:1

In this verse the writer is pointing to the way in which the Old Testament was written. There are two key phrases here:

1. **Sundry times** - This tells us that the Old Testament was written in "many parts" or "many portions". The idea is that the Old Testament was fragmented in the way that it presents Jesus Christ.
2. **Divers manners** - This is speaking of the different ways in which the writers of the Old Testament presented Jesus Christ.

If we combine these two phrases as this verse does we learn that in the Old Testament the pictures of Jesus Christ are fragmented. There are 39 books of the Old Testament and in those 39 books we find many different pictures of Jesus but there is not one of the Old Testament writers who presented the complete picture. Let me quickly show you what I mean.

Genesis 3:15

¹⁵ And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Here is the first prophecy of Jesus Christ and in this we see that He will defeat the Devil for the verse tells us He will "bruise" his head.

Exodus 12:5-7

⁵ *Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:*

⁶ *And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.*

⁷ *And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.*

Here in Exodus 12 we see a picture of Jesus and in this picture we are able to see that He will be the Lamb who will die and shed His blood and those who are under His blood will be protected from the judgment of God.

Numbers 16:41, 47-48

⁴¹ *But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.*

⁴⁷ *And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation; and, behold, the plague was begun among the people: and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people.*

⁴⁸ *And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.*

In these 3 verses we see that all of Israel rebels against Moses and Aaron. It is then that Moses sends Aaron into the midst of them to make an atonement to stop the plague. This is a picture of how man has rebelled against God. It is also a picture of how God sent His Son to this earth, into the midst of sin to offer THE SACRIFICE and defeat the plague of death. This again is a glimpse of Jesus Christ and His work upon the cross.

We could go on and on for there are hundreds and hundreds of pictures in the Old Testament writings but they are all fragmented. This is exactly the point which the writer of Hebrews is making. The writers of the Old Testament were inspired by God but they never had the full picture.

2 Peter 1:21

²¹ For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

The writers were "moved" by the Holy Ghost in the sense that the Holy Spirit revealed to them the Truth which they recorded. It was fragmented Truth but it was still the Truth from God.

Now as we move on in Hebrews 1:2 we are going to see the contrast which the writer sets forth.

Notice Hebrews 1:2a

Here is the contrast. In the "time past" the picture was fragmented but now, in the "last days" God has spoken by His Son, therefore the picture is no longer fragmented.

In the time past God revealed Himself through the prophets, but in these last days God has revealed Himself through His Son. Now I want you to understand that when the writer refers to Jesus as the Son of God this would have had a very deep meaning for the Jews.

John 5:16-18

¹⁶ And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.

¹⁷ But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

¹⁸ *Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.*

Many of the Jews hated Jesus because He referred to God as His Father and the Jews understood that to mean that He was equal with God.

Therefore when the writer of Hebrews points to Jesus as the Son of God He is pointing to the deity of Jesus Christ which is the fact that Jesus was God; therefore Jesus was the complete revelation of God in the flesh. The prophets all pointed to Him in fragments and now He had come and He was the complete revelation of God.

John 14:7-10

⁷ *If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*

⁸ *Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.*

⁹ *Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?*

¹⁰ *Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.*

Let me show you the words of the woman at the well in John 4.

John 4:25

²⁵ *The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.*

This woman understood that when Jesus came the picture would be complete for He would be the fulfillment of the fragmented writings and revelations of the prophets.

But I believe there is far more which the writer is pointing to in Hebrews 1:2a with this statement. Let us not lose sight of who this book is addressed to and what it is that was happening in their lives (we must stay close to the context). They were under persecution because of their faith in Christ and because of the pressure they were under some of them desired to step back under the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant was good but it was incomplete. In the Old Testament under the Old Covenant we can see the **Righteousness** of God. In other words as we work our way through the Old Testament writings we can see how God never compromised when it came to sin. This is seen in the flood of Noah's day when possibly up to 10 billion people were drowned. His righteousness is seen at Mount Sinai when He gave the Law and how He required perfection in the keeping of the Law. His uncompromising judgment of sin is seen the entire way through the wilderness wanderings as time after time hundreds and sometimes thousands of people died because of the sin which they had fallen into.

Then we come to the New Covenant or the New Testament and while His Righteousness is never diminished and we continue to see that sin still must be judged and paid for, there is now a revelation of **GRACE** and **LOVE** that are manifest through His only begotten Son. It is in the Son of God that we are able to see the depth of His love for each of us even while we are sinners who were set against the will of God.

Romans 5:8-10

⁸ *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

⁹ *Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

¹⁰ *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

So the writer of Hebrews is saying to his readers, "Why would you want to go back under the Law when you can live under GRACE? He is saying, "Jesus is God in the flesh and in Him we can see God's righteousness, love and grace. He is the very ONE the prophets pointed to, so let's press forward in Christ for it is in Him that we have eternal life and will come to know more of God."

Notice what Jesus said concerning eternal life:

John 17:1-3

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

² *As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*

³ *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

There is yet another point I want to consider in this verse before we move on.

Notice Hebrews 1:2a

The phrase "in these last days" would have had a double meaning to the Jews who had received this letter. I am reminded that the writer of

Hebrews could have said, "In these days" but instead he said, "In these LAST days".

1. It was a reminder to the Jews that Jesus was the final revelation. There was nothing else coming. The phrase "last days" refers to the end of the age. The time between the ascension of Jesus Christ and the return of Jesus Christ. They were thinking of going back to the Old Covenant and so with this statement he was telling them Jesus is the complete and the final revelation. Those in the Old Testament were anxiously awaiting the coming of the Messiah and now He was here. The idea is if these Jews were to go back to the Old Covenant what would they then look for? What would they be waiting for? What would they be living for?
2. The phrase "these last days" would have carried the mind of the Jew back to the writings of the Old Testament prophets. It would have placed in their minds the prophecies of the Kingdom Age. Let me show you what I mean.

Isaiah 2:2

² *And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.*

³ *And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

⁴ *And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into*

pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Connected with this would have been many other prophecies pointing to the Kingdom.

Isaiah 65:17-23

¹⁷ For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

¹⁸ But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

¹⁹ And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

²⁰ There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.

²¹ And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

²² They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

²³ They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them.

Conclusion:

Now let me pull all of this together and explain something very important. The writer is doing all he can to pull these people forward in their spiritual walk. In this verse he is, in a subtle way, reminding them that they are ever closer to the return of the King and the establishment of the Kingdom. They were in the "last days". The One

whom the prophets spoke of has come and He is God in the flesh. He is full of GRACE and TRUTH. There is nothing else to wait for. There are no more coming revelations. Jesus is the final Word of God. For that reason he is saying, "Don't go backward but instead endure the pressure and move forward. There is nothing better than deepening your relationship with Jesus Christ."

Some people would say that I am seeing too much in what is written in Hebrews 1:1-3. My reply is, "No we are not!" This is God's Word it is not to be read as a newspaper. It is to be taken and meditated on. The original group of believers who received this letter were to take this letter and carefully read through Word by Word. They would have seen far more here than what we have for they were able to see it from the Jewish perspective.

Application: How does all of this apply to us? There are times of great pressure which come into our lives because of our faith in Christ. In those times I have seen people go "backwards" in the sense that they did not want to deal with the pressure so they decided to blend in with the rest of their old friends and family. They stepped back from the front lines. Let me just say that we are living in the last days even deeper than the recipients of this letter. We are ever closer to the return of Jesus Christ. There is nothing better in this world than Jesus. He came into this world to save us and to lead us into a relationship of peace and contentment. Don't run from the "valleys" in your life because it is in the valleys that the soil is the most fertile and therefore it grows the best fruit. Hold tight to Jesus in the midst of the pressure and watch what He can do when we trust in Him. Ever so soon we will be walking the streets of God.