

**Christ is Superior to the Prophets
Hebrews 1:1-2**

When we as professing believers are under pressure, when we are in trouble, when our lives are not what we would like them to be, can we in those times become vulnerable to thinking unprofitable thoughts? Absolutely! And what can those unprofitable thoughts lead to? They can very easily lead to unprofitable decisions.

And I believe the dynamic of what I just shared with you was made very evident to us last week when we considered the background information for the book of Hebrews. And what was this background information that I shared with you?

The recipients of the book of Hebrews, based on the internal evidence of the book, were primarily Hebrew Christians living in Rome. Who, unfortunately, after converting to Christianity, had been consistently suffering persecution, both from the Gentiles as well as from their Jewish brethren, which led them to what? It led them to unprofitable thoughts about their Christian faith, which in turn led many of them to an unprofitable decision to no longer officially gather with their professing Christian brethren in Rome. And how unprofitable was that decision? It was extremely unprofitable, for though they may not have known it or perhaps were not willing to admit it, they were very much in danger of falling away from the Christian faith back into Judaism because of this decision. And because of this, when certain ones of them decided or were seriously considering to no longer officially assemble themselves together with other Christian brethren in Rome, it only compounded the danger that was before them or in other words the danger of falling away from the Christian faith back into Judaism.

So based on this background information that I shared with you, can we say with some degree of confidence that when we find ourselves in difficulty, when we find ourselves in trouble, when we find ourselves in the midst of suffering, when we find ourselves in the midst of various unpleasant circumstances, that we could very easily become vulnerable to thinking unprofitable thoughts, which in turn might lead us to unprofitable decision making? And I believe the answer would have to be yes! Clearly the

background information that I supplied for you last week does in fact point to this conclusion.

So if we are here this morning and we are experiencing troubles of various kinds and our lives are not what we might want our lives to be, could we consider ourselves in danger? Yes! We should consider ourselves in danger, for we are in danger.

So, what do we need to do in order to protect ourselves from this danger of responding in unprofitable ways to bad situations? We need to focus on the truths of God's Word.

And this is something that the author of Hebrews knew very well. And this is why he wrote the book. He wrote the book of Hebrews to communicate to these struggling Hebrew Christians a very basic truth that God had revealed in order to protect them from the unprofitable thoughts and the unprofitable decision making that was putting them in danger of falling away from the Christian faith back into Judaism.

And what was this very specific truth that these struggling Hebrew Christians needed to know at this particular time from this author as they were teetering on this dangerous precipice? The specific truth that these struggling Hebrew Christians needed know was that Christ was superior. This is what they needed to know. And this is why this unknown author of the book of Hebrews continuously wove the theme of Christ's superiority throughout this magnificent letter. And this brings us to the question that we will be seeking to answer as we throughout our study of this magnificent book of Hebrews. And what is that question?

How did the author of the book of Hebrews see Christ as superior? The author of the book of Hebrews wastes no time in seeking to answer this question and to engage his readers at the point of their struggle, which of course in the minds of these struggling Hebrew Christians would have involved the issue of whether or not Christ was truly superior to all that they so highly valued prior to becoming Christians.

So now let me read for you **Hebrews 1:1-4** and see if this is not so. **“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, (2) in these last days has spoken to us in His Son,**

whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. (3) And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.”

So do we in this opening statement find the author of Hebrews immediately engaging his readers at the point of their struggle or in other words at the point of helping them to determine whether or not Christ was truly superior to all that they so highly valued prior to becoming Christians? And what is the answer? The answer is absolutely!

But before we seek to identify the specific ways in which the author of this book initially saw Christ as superior within these first four verses of his opening statement, I would like to first of all comment about the opening statement itself. For it is a truly spectacular opening statement.

So, what is so spectacular about it? This opening may be the stylistic apex of the entire Greek New Testament. The intricate structural organization of the clauses, phrases and words that constitute this single four-verse 72 word sentence in the Greek took a great amount of literary skill, which the author put on full display by his use of alliterations, meter, rhythms, phonetic and semantic parallelisms, repetitions and chiasm as noted by David Allen in his commentary on Hebrews. But certainly its literary style is not the only thing that sets this opening statement apart.

The breathtaking theological sweep of this opening statement also sets it apart as it makes significant contributions to our understanding of the biblical doctrines of revelation, Christology, soteriology, creation and eschatology.

And beyond the stylistic beauty and the breathtaking theological sweep of this opening statement, we have the introduction of the theme of the book, which is as I have already stated, is the superiority of Christ.

So would this opening statement, made to these struggling Hebrew Christians in Rome, have immediately caught their attention? Absolutely! And this is exactly what I believe that this unknown author of this

magnificent book intended to do. He wanted to capture their attention. And I believe the author this statement would have certainly done that.

So now having caught the attention of his readers with this truly magnificent opening statement, in what way did this author first of all see Christ as superior.

The author of the book of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to the Old Testament prophets (Hebrews 1:1-4). So how did he see them as being superior to them?

The author of the book of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to the Old Testament prophets in respect to Him being the culmination of divine revelation (Hebrews 1:1-2a). Let us now go back and read **Hebrews 1:1-2a** and see if this is not so.

“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, (2) in these last days has spoken to us in His Son.” In this statement I believe the author of the book of Hebrews is clearly communicating to his readers the superiority of Christ to the prophets. So in order to understand how he does this we need to look more carefully at what we just read.

And where does what we just read immediately take us? It immediately us back to a time long ago when God spoke to the fathers in the prophets.

So who are these fathers that God spoke to so long ago? The common expression “to the fathers” is not restricted here to the biblical patriarchs but to designate all the people of God under the old covenant (Acts 3:13).

Later in the book of Hebrews the author will present these ancestors of his present readers who long ago had lived under the old covenant as positive and negative models of Christian obedience in **Hebrews 3, 4 and 11**. But obviously this is not how the author is using his reference to the fathers here. He is simply making the point that those living in earlier times under the old covenant (i.e. “the fathers”) had been spoken to by God through the prophets.

And how had the prophets in these long ago times communicated with them? Let us go back to the verse. **“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways...”** So how had God, in times long ago, spoke to the fathers or in others to all those who had at once lived under the old covenant through the prophets? He spoke to them **“in many portions and in many ways.”**

So, what does that mean? “In many portions” (POLYMEROS) means that what was given to the fathers in the prophets was given in fragments rather than in a complete package.

And what does **“in many ways”** mean? “In many ways” (POLYTROPOS) is a word that suggests diversity of forms. And what might be some of those forms by which the fathers were spoken to by God through the prophets? Some of the forms could be things like commands, exhortations, stories, visions, dreams, mighty acts, theophanies, which certainly not in any way should be considered a complete list of all the many ways that God had spoken to the fathers, those living under the old covenant, through the prophets.

But now we come to the very first part of **verse 2** and there we see a stark contrast in how the author of this letter told these readers that God had spoken to them.

So let us now continue to read and what did he say? **“In these last days has spoken to us in His Son.”**

Clearly this expression was given by the author to make sure that the recipients of this letter understood that when God spoke to them in His Son that the recipients understood that having been spoken to in His Son was superior to what had been spoken to their fathers in the prophets.

So, what did the author mean by “in these last days?” The expression “in these last days was understood by the Jews to mean the time period when Christ would come (Numbers 24:14).

And so it is only appropriate that here in addressing these Hebrew Christians, who had at one time chosen to believe that Jesus was in fact that

Christ, that he would reference this phrase when saying to them, **“in these last days has spoken to us in His Son.”**

This expression **“in His Son”** is particularly significant in bringing the superiority of Christ to the prophets alive in this section of verses that were designed to powerfully illustrate this very point all the way down through **verse 4.**

So, what is so particularly significant about this expression **“in his Son?”** The author included no article prior to the word “Son” (HUIO) which was meant to emphasis the unique relationship of Jesus with the Father or in other words as one who relates to him “as son” and not “as a son.”

So did the author of Hebrew consider Christ to be superior to the prophets because he was the culmination of divine revelation? Absolutely! And this is something that he very much wanted the recipients of this letter to appreciate as well.

May God give us the grace when facing difficult times not to focus on the difficulties of our situation but on the truths of God’s Word.