

Christ is Superior to the Prophets

Hebrews 1:3

Part Five

We are continuously making plans. We are continuously making all kinds of plans about all kinds of things. And certainly we should not feel bad about making plans as long as we, in light of God's sovereignty, hold those plans very loosely.

This point I believe is made very clear to us in **James 4:13-15**. **“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.’ (14) Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. (15) Instead, you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that?’”**

So should we hold our plans loosely? Absolutely! And why should we hold them loosely? We should hold them loosely, for we should understand, that if our plans comes into conflict with God's eternal plan for the universe, God's eternal plan for the universe will always steamroll our plans. So do we believe this? I hope so, because this is the truth.

Let me read for you **Isaiah 14:27** and see if this is not so. And what does this verse say? **“For the Lord of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?”** So if our plans come into conflict with God's plan, will His plan always steamroll our plans, no matter how important our plan or plans might be to us? Absolutely!

Now all this may be a little bit disconcerting for us but it shouldn't be, if we by faith, can accept the fact that when God's eternal plan, which is a redemptive plan, steamrolls our plans, it will always work out for our best.

And I believe this thought was communicated very clearly to the Roman Church by the Apostle Paul in **Romans 8:28-30**. So now let me read these verses for you. **“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (29) For those whom He foreknew, He also**

predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; (30) and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.” So does God have an eternal redemptive plan for this universe? Yes! And does this redemptive plan include us, if we are a true follower of Christ? Yes! And can we know, even if His eternal plan steamrolls our plans, that this is really in our best interest? Yes! We can know all of this to be true.

We, as the followers of Christ, according to God’s eternal plan, have been put on a train bound for glory. It is the “glory train,” and it will not stop, nor wait, nor be delayed by anything, including our plans, no matter how good we may think our plans to be.

And who is the One that is going to make sure of that? Who is the One who is going to make sure that God’s eternal redemptive plan is not going to get derailed or even delayed?

This question brings us back to our study of Hebrews, which was written by an unknown author, to a group of Hebrew Christians living in Rome around 67-69 AD in order to strengthen their faith in the midst of a great persecution, so that they in the midst of that persecution would not be tempted to turn from Christ back to Judaism.

So how did the author of this letter seek to strengthen the faith of these struggling Hebrew Christians by his letter? He sought to strengthen their faith by showing them throughout his letter that Christ was superior to anything that they might have left behind in Judaism, which led us to the question that we are now seeking to answer, as we continue our study of this book. And what is that question?

How did the author of the book of Hebrews see Christ as superior?

First of all, the author of the book of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to the Old Testament prophets (Hebrews 1:1-4). So in what way did the author of Hebrews see Christ as superior to these prophets?

The author of the book of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to the Old Testament prophets because he believed that Christ, being God's Son, was the culmination of divine revelation (Hebrews 1:1-2a).

In other words, the author of the book of Hebrews saw the Old Testament prophets simply as an opening act of divine revelation sent to prepare the way for the true headliner, who was Christ, the only begotten Son of God. We saw this in **Hebrews 1:1** through the first part of **verse 2**.

But the author of Hebrews was not satisfied with simply having made this point. He wanted to drive this point home to his readers even further. So how did the author seek to accomplish this?

The author of Hebrews continued to drive home the magnitude of Christ's superiority to the Old Testament prophets by providing a sevenfold description of Christ (Hebrews 1:2b-4). And where did the author record this sevenfold description? He recorded it for us in **Hebrews 1:2-4**. So now let me quickly review for you that parts of this description that we have already covered.

The author of Hebrews described Christ as God's appointed heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2b). We saw this description in the middle of **verse 2**.

The author of Hebrews described God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the One through whom God made the world (Hebrews 1:2c). We saw this description at the end of **verse 2**.

The author of Hebrews described God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the radiance of His Father's glory and the exact representation of His nature (Hebrews 1:3). We saw this description at the beginning of **verse 3**.

We are now ready to move on in our study of the text to the next descriptive phrase that the author used to describe Christ. And where can we find this descriptive phrase? We can find this descriptive phrase in the middle of **verse 3**. So now let us go back to **Hebrews 1:1** and read through our text until we get to this particular phrase.

“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 [now here comes the description] 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 now we come to the author's next descriptive phrase], and upholds all things by the word of His power." So how else did the author of Hebrews describe Christ?

The author of Hebrews described Christ as the One who upholds all things by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3b). So, what does this mean? I believe that once we have examined this descriptive phrase carefully, we will discover that when the author of Hebrews described Christ in this way, that he did so in order to convey to his readers that it is Christ that has been entrusted by His Father with the responsibility of making sure that the whole of the created universe is working in harmony with God's eternal redemptive plan so that His plan, which includes us, might be brought to its perfect completion at its appointed time to the praise of God's glory.

So who is the One who is going to make sure that God's eternal redemptive plan is not going to get derailed or even delayed? It is Christ! And I believe that this will become clear to us this morning as we examine what the author meant when he described Christ as **"upholding all things by the word of His power."**

So now let us look at this new descriptive phrase more carefully and see if this is not so. So let us begin by looking at how this phrase fits in with the flow our passage.

So how does it fit? After describing Christ's relationship to His Father or in other words after describing Christ as **"the radiance of His Father's glory and the exact representation of His Father's nature,"** the author of Hebrews then wanted to describe Christ's relationship to the universe or in other words His relationship with "all things."

So how did the author of Hebrews describe Christ's relationship with the universe? According to the NASV, ESV, and the KJV the author of Hebrews described Christ as **"upholding"** the universe; and according to the NIV the author of Hebrews described Christ as **"sustaining"** the universe.

So based on these various translations how did author of Hebrews describe Christ's relationship with the universe? This is how he described it. Christ's relationship with the universe is that He "upholds" it or in other words He "sustains" it. This is how the author described Christ's relationship with the universe or in other words with **"all things."**

So right now, what is Christ doing in respect to the universe He has created? He is **"upholding"** it or in other words He is **"sustaining"** it. So hopefully we can all agree that this is exactly what the Scriptures teach.

But now we come to a more difficult question. What exactly does this mean that Christ is **"upholding"** or **"sustaining"** the universe?

Let me share with you a very common view of what this work entails. Christ's work of **"upholding"** or **"sustaining"** the universe is His supernatural work of holding everything in the universe together thus preventing our universe from self-destructing.

So is this what the author meant to communicate to us when he spoke of Christ as **"upholding"** or **"sustaining"** all things or in other words the whole of the universe?

Though I believe that this thought certainly can be understood as a part of Christ's "upholding" or "sustaining" work, I do not believe that this thought was the primary thought that the author was seeking to convey when he chose the Greek word that he chose, that has been translated "upholds" or "sustains."

So with this in mind, let us consider the Greek word that the author chose to communicate to his readers Christ's present relationship to creation.

The Greek word that has been translated "upholds" or "sustains" is the Greek word PHERO, which means to "bear" or "carry along" (Matthew 14:11, 18; 17:17).

To help this basic definition to come alive for us let me just read for you at random just a few verses from the Gospel of Matthew.

And what is the first verse? **Matthew 14:11**, which is in the context of the murder of John the Baptist, and what does it say? “**And his head** [referring to John the Baptists head] **was brought** [or in other words carried along] **on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it** [or in other words carried it along] **to her mother.**”

So now let me read for you **Matthew 14:18**, which is in the context of the feeding of the 5000, and what does it say? “**And He said** [referring to Christ speaking to His disciples], **bring them** [referring to the five loaves and two fishes] **here to Me.**”

Now let me read for you **Matthew 17:17**, which is in the context of a healing of a demon-possessed man, and what does it say? “**And Jesus answered and said, ‘You unbelieving and perverted generation** [referring to His disciples and their weak faith], **how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him** [referring to the demon possessed man] **here to Me.**”

In each of these verses the Greek PHERO was used. And each time it was used it was used to convey the idea of carrying something forward for some specific purpose and this is how this word is consistently used not only in the New Testament but also in extra-biblical materials as well.

Therefore when it comes to this matter of what the author meant when he described Christ as “upholding” or “sustaining” all things, we should not think that his primary thought was to convey to his readers that Christ’s present relationship to the universe is holding it together or in other words to keep it from exploding. So if this was not the primary thought that the author wanted to convey when he chose the Greek word PHERO, what was his primary thought.

The Greek word PHERO was chosen to describe Christ’s work of carrying forward “all things” in a manner consistent with God’s eternal redemptive plan until that plan is fully realized. This is what I believe the author was seeking to convey when he used the Greek word “PHERO” to convey what he wanted to convey about Christ’s present relationship to “all things” or in other words to the whole of this universe.

And how does the author of Hebrews describe Christ as carrying forward this universe in a manner consistent with His Father's eternal redemptive plan? He describes Christ as carrying His Father's eternal redemptive plan forward **“by the power of His word.”**

Isn't this exactly what the verse tells us? **“And he upholds all things by the power of His word.”** So, what does the author mean by this?

Just as Christ, in obedience to His Father through the power of His word, was able to speak the universe into existence, Christ continues to be able, through the power of His word, to carry the universe forward in perfect conformity with His Father's eternal redemptive plan.

So is Christ superior to the Old Testament prophets based on this descriptive phrase that we have considered this morning? Absolutely! And why is He superior to the Old Testament prophets? He is superior because He upholds or sustains all things or in other words this universe by the word of His power.

So now let me ask you this question. If we believe this, would this help us when it comes to our personal planning? And I would believe the answer would have to be yes.

And why is this?

May God give us the grace to understand that if our plans are derailed by Christ as He upholds all things, this is not a bad thing it is a good thing.