

CHRIST: SUPERIOR TO THE PROPHETS

Hebrews 1:1-3

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Introduction: There are some Greek play on words in verse 1 that are not seen in the English, “polymeros kai polytropos palai ho theos lalesas tois patrasin en tois prophetais.” (1:1) There many important factors within the underlying Greek text that the author makes that do not come through into the English. We will try to cover some of these in this lesson. This lesson places great emphasis on the revelation of God, the Old Testament prophets, the transition from Old to New , and exactly who Christ is.

In this lesson we have four points to cover which take us through the author’s insights.

1. GOD HAS SPOKEN

"God who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past... by the prophets..." (1:1, NKJV)

The definite article is used with God. (“the” God) It is “the” God who has spoken.

A. Different times (Greek “polymeros”) Heb. 1:1

The words “different times” come from two Greek words: “poly” meaning “many” and “meros” meaning “parts.” (Wuest, p. 31)

Moses (1445BC) to Malachi (400BC)

Job (2,200BC) to Nehemiah (400BC) (MacArthur, MBC, p. 1835)

B. Different ways (Greek “polytropos”) Heb. 1:1

The words “different ways” come from two Greek words: “ploy” meaning “many” and “tropos” meaning “ways, manner or fashion.” (Wuest, p. 31)

-through a visible angel of the Lord to Abraham (Gen. 22:15)

-through a burning bush to Moses (Ex. 3:2-4)

-through lightening and thunder to Israel (Ex. 19:16; 20:18)

-through the voice of a trumpet to Israel (Ex. 19:16; 20:18)

-through a still small voice to Elijah (1 Kings 19:12)

-through dreams to Daniel (Dan. 7:1)

-through the prophets (Isa. 1:1; Jer. 14:14; Ez. 1:1; Dan. 7:1; Obed. 1:1; Mic. 1:1; Nah. 1:1; Zech. 1:8)

“Though the literary form and style varied, it was always God’s revelation of what He wanted His people to know. The progressive revelation of the OT described God’s program of redemption (1 Pt. 1:10-12) and His will for His people (Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).” (MacArthur, MBC, p. 1835)

God singled out the “prophets” over all the other forms.

2. THE PROPHETS (Old Testament, Hebrew "nabi")

"God who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past... by the prophets..." (1:1, NKJV)

“The definite article appearing before the word ‘prophets,’ sets these individuals off by themselves as a class.” (Wuest, p. 34)

A. The ministry of the prophets

"Old Testament prophets had an amazing responsibility. They were able to speak and write words that had absolute divine authority." (Grudem, p. 1050)

A prophet was "A person who serves as a channel of communication between the human and divine worlds. The etymology of the title is uncertain, but it may mean 'one who calls' or 'one who is called.'" (Achteemeier, p, 826)

Prophets were "called men inspired of the Lord to become vehicles of God's message. The prophets are forthtellers (declaring the truth about God) by being foretellers (predicting what God will do)." (Elwell, Vol 2. p.1781)

B. The limitations of the prophets

- No prophet spoke on his own but relayed what God revealed to him. God was in the prophets at the time they spoke (2 Peter 1:21).
- No prophet devised his message on his own. What the prophets wrote was literally inspired (breathed out) by God (2 Timothy 3:16).
- No single prophet completely revealed all of the Father's will.
- No prophet was important based on his own individual character.
- No prophet had special personal qualifications other than his own call.

To prevent the Hebrews from concluding that Christ was nothing more than another instrument through which God had "spoken," the Holy Spirit presents Christ as the "Superior" and "final" source of God's revelation. (Pink, p. 31; Lane, p. 9)

3. THE TIMING OF A GREAT TRANSITION

"God... spoke in times past... has in these last days spoke..." (1:1-2, NKJV)

A. There is a progression of truth revealed from "past" to "end times."

"The phrase 'in time past' (Greek "palai") must be seen in contrast to 'the last days' (Greek "eschatou ton hemeron") in which God revealed Himself in His Son." (Gromacki, p. 23) "The Greek has two words meaning 'old,' 'archaios,' meaning 'old in point of time,' and 'palaios,' meaning 'old in point of use, worn out, ready to be displaced by something new.'" (Wuest, p. 32)

B. There is contrast and connection between the "old" and the "new."

"The two verbs 'spake' and 'has spoken' show this movement from the old to the new." (Gromacki, p. 21) "The word 'spake' is a participle in the Greek text, and is associated with the word 'spoken' of verse two, which is an infinitive verb. That is, 'God, having spoken, spoke.' Thus, we have two revelations, that of the first testament and that of the new, joined together." (Wuest, p. 33)

C. There is a change in program from under "Moses" to "Christ."

The phrase "in these last days" literally reads in the Greek "at the last of these days." "Thus the author would be calling attention to the recent occurrence of the revelation in Christ, coming at the end of the Old Testament period." (Kent, p. 35)

4. CHRIST IS SUPERIOR OR BETTER THAN THE PROPHETS

"In the Son" does not have the definite article "the" with the word Son, which means the term "Son" is not just a title, but defines Christ's character and nature." (Lange, p. 25)

"The Greek here is simply 'in Son' emphasizing that the person of His Son contains everything. He is the ultimate medium of communication." (Hughes, p. 21)

The article is used with the prophets, however, "The fact that the article is absent before the word Son emphasizes character, nature. It speaks of the distinction that exists between the prophets as God's creatures used as instruments in His hands and the Son who by nature is Deity." (Wuest, p. 34)

A. Christ's ministry.

"In the past God had given His word to the prophets in many installments and by various methods, but only Jesus could declare the full message of the invisible God." (Willmington, p. 516)

Peter claimed that the Spirit of Christ was in the prophets at the time they testified, (1 Peter 1:11).

B. Christ's superiority

"There is no definite article nor any pronoun before the word 'son,' which... suggests that the phrase does not present the person as an object before the mind, but brings character into prominence." (English, p. 41)

There is a seven-fold description of Christ having supremacy and a better "name," (Heb. 1:4).

-The Inheritor

He is appointed by God as heir of all things, (Heb. 1:2; Ps. 2:8; Jn. 3:35).

"The AV (King James Version) has correctly used the English perfect tense here to translate the Greek Aorist, for no definite time is in mind. As the Sonship is eternal so the appointment to the inheritance belongs to the eternal decree of God." (Hewitt, p. 51)

-The Creator

He is the One through whom God created all the ages, (Heb. 1:2; Jn 1:3; Col. 1:16).

"The word 'worlds' (Greek "aionas") is better translated as 'ages.' It deals with time and the movement of history...." (Gromacki, p. 26)

-The Brightness (effulgency)(Lange has "beaming image")

He is the brightness of God's glory, (Heb. 1:3). "The term 'brightness' (Greek "apaugasma") comes from a verb which can mean either to 'radiate' or 'reflect.' The 'glory' is the full manifestation of the divine attributes and essence. The participle 'being' (Greek "on") further points out Christ's absolute, timeless existence." (Gromacki, p. 27) The term is used only here in the NT. (MacArthur, MBC, p. 1835)

-The Respresentor (express image)

He is the absolute expression of the collective attributes of deity, (Heb. 1:3; Jn. 1:18; Rom. 9:5). "The term 'express image' (Greek "charakter") indicates that He is the perfect representation of the divine essence." (Gromacki, p. 27) "Just as the image and superscription on a coin exactly corresponds to the device on the die, so the Son of God bears the very stamp of His nature. The Greek word "charakter" occurring here only in the New Testament. (Bruce, p. 6; Lane, p. 13)

-The Governor (upholder and sustainer)

He is the upholder of all things, (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17). "The participle 'upholding' (Greek "pheron") implies not only support, but also direction or movement toward a goal." (Gromacki, p. 28)

"The writer is very specific here. He does not use 'logos' ('word'), which is used to indicate revelation, but 'rhema' ('word'), the spoken word." (Hughes, p. 28)

-The Redeemer

He is the purifier of sins, (Heb. 1:3). "The verb 'had purged' (Greek "katharismos poiesamenos") literally means 'having made a purification.'" (Gromacki, p. 29)

-The Ruler

He is now at the Father's right hand, (Heb. 1:3).

Conclusion: Christ has is the better Covenant, the better prophet, and the better name because He is God and God's final revelation to mankind.

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