

The Superiority of Christ Hebrews 1:1-3

John 1:1-14
2 Corinthians 3
Responsive. Psalm 150

So this morning we are going to officially begin our Journey through the book of Hebrews. Having laid down the foundation for our study last week with a quick overview of the themes and history of this book. Today we are going to start diving into the content, and boy is there some meaty content here. As I had mentioned last week, the structure of this book is unique when compared to all other books of the New Testament for the simple fact that it doesn't start out with greetings, or any real introduction but rather as we will see here this morning just dives right in, and these first 3 verses are just completely packed through with doctrine and really sets the tone for the rest of the book

So let us start this morning by reading, and even though we are only going to be focusing on the first 3 verses, I want to read the full chapter. (Read Hebrews Chapter 1.) So, as we had said last week in our introduction even though we do not know to whom this letter was specifically written, we do know that it was written to Jew's who had converted to Christianity. Knowing that gives us a bit of insight into the beginning verses here, and sets forth the profound statements that this author makes. He wastes no time in setting up any argument of proofs before jumping right into some fairly deep theological statements, and is quite upfront with his readers that he intends to show, and to prove the superiority of Christ, the Son of God. But not only the superiority of Christ, but also of the finality of God's revelation fulfilled through his Son.

As we see in these first few verses this revelation of Christ is unique, and different then the revelation of the prophets who came before. Christ is both the fulfillment of those prophets, and the final prophet. There are those who believe in prophesy today, there are some who believe that there are still those who are given prophetic messages, some claim to have been given visions, or dreams, or they claim that God has spoken to them some sort of way revealing some new truth to them. But lets look at the first 2 verses here again, and as we read them take note in what tense it is written. "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets." So we see the author here mentioning the old testament prophets that God had directly given messages, and visions to speak to his people. He says, at various times, in various ways spoke, past tense, and as it even says, in times past. This verse can not be used as any justification of current manifestation of such gifts of prophesy. One can not using this verse rightly and make any argument about God working through them in various ways. For as we see the author here says that God did this in times past, it is no longer what happens, it is no longer the case, it is no longer how God operates. God no longer uses men as his prophets to give his word or message to his people. This way has past, it is unnecessary, and not needed because of what is said in verse 2.

"has in these last days, spoken to us by His Son" There is now no longer a need for the prophetic gifts, for God has now spoken through his son. The prophets of Old had told of the Messiah to come, of the savior who will reconcile his people unto himself. By the time that Jesus arrived in the flesh Israel was under Roman occupation, and the Jews took this prophesy of the coming Messiah to be in the form of liberating them from their oppressor. Their focus became political, it became physical, they believed that the Messiah would come to re-establish his kingdom to once again make Israel a great nation as it was under King David.

But as we know, in light of the revelation of the New Testament, through the ministry and teaching of Jesus himself, as the author of Hebrews says here, in this last days have been spoken to us by the Son of God, by Jesus, that these prophets of old were not foretelling of the liberation of Israel from the Roman oppression, or even necessarily re-establishing themselves as a world power, but rather it was about Christ, and his ministry and death to liberate all those who are God's chosen people from the punishment of sin. And it is through his Son, that he is spoken to us, Christ the fulfillment of the prophets of old, and Christ the final prophet from whom the word of God in hope, and salvation is given. Also notice in verse 2 it says, "in these last days" The author here is setting up even a further differentiation between that which was before, and that which is now. Which becomes a very important distinction later on when he begins to speak of the law, and the temple in later chapters.

God worked in various ways, through the law and the prophets, through ritual practices and sacrifices to instruct, inform, and teach people about himself, and his plan of salvation. But now Christ has come and in Him is the fulfillment of all of these things, they are no longer necessary, for as we said last week in the introduction, one greater than the prophets has come, one greater than the law, one greater than the temple for it was all of those things that pointed to, that foretold of his coming. There is much debate about when the last days will be, and as we all know there are various views on how the so called last days will play out. But I don't think that the author here is wrong by calling those times the last days, just as much as we can say that we are living in the last days as well. Who knows when Christ shall return, it could soon, it could be 1000's of years from now, no one knows. But that does not change the fact that as far as revelation, and scriptural understanding goes, these are the last days. Redemption has been accomplished through Christ, and it is as if the world is in the final chapters now just waiting for the end, for his return.

Returning back to verse 2, when speaking about prophesy, and God's revelation there is another important aspect that should be pointed out. Just like verse 1, was written in the past tense, so too is the second verse. "In these last days, has spoken," not speaks to, but has spoken to us by his Son. While the first verse in a very general sense could be used as an argument against such prophesies and revelations today in the way that was given to the prophets of old, through visions, dreams, ect. IF there was any doubt that such things have ceased, verse 2 seals the deal. For not only is it through Christ only in these last days, he has spoken, in past tense to us through Christ in these last days. The reality of that statement, is that all has been revealed through Christ. There is no longer a need for further revelation, there is no secret code to be found or understood, we have been given the word of God, which is Christ himself. Just as John said, in the opening lines of his gospel account that we read this morning. "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. Just like the former prophets, Jesus spoke God's word, but those prophets have died, they have past on, and faded, but Christ the Word is everlasting. Verse 2, in John, "He was in the beginning with God, and all things were made through him, and without him nothing was made that was made."

He is the eternal word which became flesh verse 14 in the 1st chapter of John, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." God spoke through his Son, by which the world and all that is in it was made, and through his Son, the living word was also given to us, new life, the new birth and adoption into God's Holy Kingdom. As the author says here, in the last half of verse 2, "whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds" God in times past spoke through the prophets, but has now spoken to us through his Son, the heir of all things, and in whom all things were created.

This is just another way in which we see that Jesus is greater than the prophets who came before, for not only is he a prophet who has ministered to us God's word, he is also God's Son in whom all of the promises are given and fulfilled. This is even another reason why there is no need for such prophecies today, for the greatest prophet of all has already spoken, revealing God's word to us making any further such prophecies unnecessary. Before, in times past there were many prophets, but now there is just the one. There is no longer a need for many different prophets now that the promised one has come. This distinction between the many, and the one is a theme we will see later in this book as well when the author talks about the priests, and the sacrifices. Spoiler, the conclusion is the same, just as Christ is the one and only prophet in these last days, so to is he the only priest and mediator between God and man, and also the only sacrifice needed for the atonement and covering of our sin. So as we can see, we are starting to get this picture that the author is painting for us of the supremacy of Christ in all things. The Word in whom all things were created, is the one through whom God spoke, he is both the priest who offers the sacrifice, and the sacrifice who was slain to cover our sins. Christ is central to all, and now that Christ has come all other such signs, rituals, practices, traditions, laws, symbols, prophecies, or any such thing that was given which taught, and pointed to him have now become unnecessary.

All of the prophets and prophecies which came before were fragments, and pieces, of what was to come, but the word given to us through the ministry of Christ is the complete revelation of God's redemption. This same distinction marks these last days in the same way. In times past, the word of God was given in part, by various ways through various prophets, it was incomplete, and is marked by anticipation of that which is to come, but that which has been given to us by God through his Son is complete, and marked by his fulfillment. The first one was preliminary, the last is the ultimate. This differentiation shows the fundamental contrast between what was, and what now is.

I am really trying to hammer in this theme of completion, and fulfillment, in Christ into our heads this morning, for it is one that marks this entire book and getting a proper understanding here of the centrality, the superiority, and supremacy of Christ in all, and through all will help as we come to subjects in this book that maybe a bit more difficult to understand. This setting Christ as the center of all things gives us a foundation, to build off of as we work our way through this book. As I said right from the start, these first 3 verses are packed full of theological truths, if we fail to understand exactly what the author is setting forth here, then we will have a very difficult time to see and understand his arguments, and exhortations throughout the rest of this book. This contrast between between the old and the new will play a prominent part in the structure of this letter as the author compares such things as the Mosaic covenant, and the levitical priest hood and sets forth as he does here with prophesy that the newness in Christ, unlike the oldness of the prophets and the law is final, permanent and complete because the it is fulfilled and established in the eternal Son, and Heir of God.

So while we see this sort of discontinuity, between what was, and what now is that does not mean that there is not also yet a strong sense of continuity as well. So while in these 2 verses we see this setting up of a disconnect, verse 1, the word of God given through the prophets, and verse 2, now the word given through the Son, there is a central thing that ties both of these things together. And that is the one who has spoken. In both the prophets, and now the Son, it is God's word which was spoken. In either case, it is God who has spoken to us, the new covenant which is established in Christ, is the realization of the promises, prophecies, and figures from which the old covenant pointed.

It has been established, it is finished, and complete. God's speaking to us is complete in his Son. As Luther wrote, "if the word of the prophets is accepted, how much more do we need to seize the gospel of Christ, since it is not a prophet speaking to us but the Lord of the prophets, it is not a servant, but a son, it is not an angel but God. The opening statements written by the author of this book, affirming that God has spoken to us through his Son, solidifies in a single sentence the message and meaning of the entire New Testament. It is the New Testament that is the witness to the redeeming act of God in Christ, and the completion of the teaching of him who himself is the Word of God.

Verse 2, says that God has spoken to us, by his Son..whom he has appointed to be the heir of all things. This yet, once again points to the supremacy of Christ, for he is the heir of the Kingdom of God, of the promises, of the blessings. Since Christ is the Son of God, and more importantly the only Son of God then he is the only and sole heir of all things. This brings up an interesting debate if we were to tease this passage out a bit. In the normal practice of how we understand heir-ship, it usually has to do with the passing of the head of the family, or the father. But that can not be the case for God is eternal, so how can it be said that Christ will inherit all things if God is eternal? Well, that starts heading into some difficult territory debating the triune nature of God, and trying to understand the mystery of The Son, and the Father, and yet God is one. IF we are not careful there are to major false ideas that one can fall into without understanding the eternal triune nature of God.

This statement here in Hebrews is not implying that God must die before the Son will inherit all things, nor is it implying that the Son will never inherit all things since the Father is eternal, so it must be talking about something else. It would seem, that this is a statement about the work of mediation between God and man then a formal inheritance as we would understand it. God had appointed the Son as the heir of all things, so that through him all of us can also become children of the Father. So with this understanding of redemption through Christ we can see that his inheritance is the innumerable community of the redeemed. As Calvin wrote, The name heir, is attributed to Christ as manifest in the flesh. For in being made man, and putting on the same nature as us, he took on himself this heirship, in order to restore us to what we had lost in Adam.

The reality of this statement, pointing to the centrality of Christ, shows that it is only through Christ that there is redemption of Sin. There is no other path, the law and righteous living will not do it for the inheritance of God's kingdom did not come through practicing the law, but it has come to the world only through the blood of Jesus Christ. As Paul wrote to the Romans, chapter 8 vs 14, well starting in verse 12. "Therefore, brethren we are debtors-not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live." Paul is talking of the law here, we are not debtors to the law, to good works, but of the spirit. Redemption comes by the spirit, through Christ, not through righteous moral living, or religious practices. Continuing on, verse 14, for as many as are led by the spirit of God, these are sons of God For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again, you did not receive a new law to become a slave to, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out Abba, Father. "

So if we have received the Spirit of adoption, and are children of God verse 16 says, "The spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then what? Heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him that we may also be glorified together. Without Christ, there is no redemption, only through Christ can be children of God. And this goes back to our study in James...God's children are obedient, not for the sake of justification, but are obedient out of love.

A child who loves their Father will seek their fathers blessing. Our acts of obedience, of kindness, and our striving to avoid sin is all because of our love for the father. The spirit within us cries out, Abba Father, and we seek his face, we seek his will, because he first loved us, and adopted us as children through the blood of his only Son, Jesus Christ.

So as you can see, there is so much packed into these verses, layer upon layer of theology and doctrine. We have spent this entire morning and we have only looked at 2, of the 4 verses that I originally intended for this week. And looking ahead at those verses they are equally as packed, so instead of being here for another 20 or so minutes this morning we will just save the next 2 verses for next week.