

Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Lesson 2
The Superiority of Christ over the Prophets
Hebrews 1:1-3

Who is Christ? Why is it so important to believe in Christ? What makes Christ different from any other religious leader? These are legitimate questions that men ask today and these same questions were asked by the people to whom the Epistle to the Hebrews was written. These professing Hebrew-Christians were beginning to question the superiority of Christianity to Judaism. These Christian-Jews were drifting from the truth of Christ and doubting their faith. They had begun to drift towards formal religious performance and they were attracted to Judaism. Inward reality of Christ was being lost and they were seriously considering making a move back into Judaism with its temple worship and animal sacrifices. Doubts were creeping into their hearts because they were facing heavy social persecution from the unsaved Jews. Some were about to abandon their faith in Christ; they felt the cost was too great to follow Christ and perhaps they had been deceived and the message of Christ was not real.

The author of the book of Hebrews writes specifically to this problem in order to convince them not to go back into Judaism. The underlying purpose of Hebrews is to show the superiority of Christianity to Judaism, or stated another way, the superiority of the New Covenant under Christ to the Old Covenant under Moses. One of the first lines of defense by a Jew would be to appeal to the Old Testament to show that the prophets were all men of God and wrote inspired Scripture, so why is it necessary to believe in Christ? Is not Jesus a mere man as were the prophets? The author, therefore, begins to contrast Christ and the prophets to show the superiority of Christ.

JESUS CHRIST IS SUPERIOR REVELATION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS (Hebrews 1:1-2a)—“***GOD, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, though whom also He made the world.***”

Old Testament Revelation (1:1)—“***GOD, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,...***”

To gain the attention of his readers, the author states that Judaism was of divine authority. God had revealed Himself to and through the prophets of old. The Old Testament was most certainly inspired of God, for “***God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets...(Heb. 1:1).***”

The God of heaven and earth speaks. Deity is not inactive or speechless. The true and living God is not dumb like the idols of the heathens or silent as the impersonal force of the philosophers. God has and still is speaking to men. A silent God is an unknown God. When God speaks, He is expressing or revealing Himself. All that we can know of God is what He has revealed of Himself and the primary source of revelation is His Word.

“in many portions” (in many parts) -- From Abraham to Malachi was a period of fifteen hundred years and during that time God spoke frequently - to some a few words, to others many. In the Old Testament, God spoke through the Law, the prophets, the poetical books and history. He spoke part by part in progressive stages. Each of these revelations only sets forth a part of God’s will and was not final or complete. The Old Testament revelation was progressive. All could not be revealed at once because all could not be understood at once.

“and in many ways” -- In the Old Testament, many different ways or methods of revelation were used. God revealed Himself through visions, dreams, prophecy, the tabernacle, offerings, the priesthood, types, miracles, psalms and sermons. It was the same Word, the Word of Jehovah, but it came in varied ways.

“after He spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets” -- God, who revealed truth in the Old Testament, is the same God who reveals truth in the New Testament. God, in the Old Testament, revealed Himself and His plan to the fathers (leaders) of Israel through the prophets. A prophet represents God before men; he is God’s spokesman.

Much of the revelation of the Old Testament was by types and shadows that prefigured Christ who was the reality. Old Testament revelation was good, but it pointed forward to that which was better—Jesus Christ. The revelation of the Old Testament was elementary and preparatory to the final revelation of Christ Himself.

A little boy came home from Sunday School and said the teacher had taught him about Joseph. His parents said, “Did they teach you anything about Jesus?” The boy said, “No, Jesus is at the other end of the Book.” This boy was not clear in his thinking, for Christ is all through the Old Testament in types and shadows, but the real substance of Christ is at the end of the Book as He is revealed in the New Testament.

New Testament Revelation (1:2a)—***“In these last days has spoken to us in His Son...”***

The author also points out that New Testament revelation is superior to Old Testament revelation because New Testament revelation deals with Christ who is the reality and substance of the Old Testament types and shadows. The prophets wrote of Christ who was to come, but today we have Christ who has come. We have what the Old Testament prophets longed for and hoped for.

“in these last days...” -- The word “last” means extreme or last in time. This not only means that Christ fulfills the Old Testament in these last days, but that He is God’s final revelation. God has revealed Himself completely in Jesus Christ. There is no more revelation after Christ. Christ is the end, the consummation of all God’s speaking.

The Gospels tell us about the life of Christ; the Acts tells us about the continued life of Christ in the world; the Epistles interpret the life of Christ for us, and the Revelation speaks of Christ and His final glory. All revelation has closed with Christ and the New Testament.

“...has spoken to us in His Son...” -- Literally this says “in son” or “in a son.” The absence of

the article “the” before “son” stresses the quality and character of the revelation. This emphasizes the unique person of the Son. The stress is upon the nature of the revealer. Our attention is focused not on what He did, but on who He is. The final revelation of God did not come through a man or an angel, but by one who was generically different, a son, that is, the unique Son of God, who is Himself God.

Jesus Christ can make a final and complete revelation because He is, in His very nature, God come in the flesh. A revelation through the Son would be better than one through any of His servants. The prophets were but mere creatures used of God, but Christ, His Son, was true Deity.

The ultimate revelation of God is Christ. Mark 9:7 says, ***“This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!”*** Every person must hear what the Son has to say, for He claims to be the Way, the Truth and the Life. If we are to know God, we must know His Son. Some people today know more about Moses and the Law than they do about God’s Son. Others know more about Anti-Christ than they do about Christ. Only knowledge of Christ can bring us to God. ***“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me’”*** (John 14:6).

God is revealing Himself Son-wise in these last days. His revelation to us is one of love because it is Son like. God might have spoken “Almighty-wise” as He did at Sinai, but that would have terrified and overwhelmed us. God might have spoken “Judge-wise,” as He will at the Great White Throne, but that would have condemned us, and forever banished us from His presence. But He didn’t; He revealed Himself Son-wise, which is the most tender love relationship God could sustain with human beings, and through His Son, He brings men to Himself.

JESUS CHRIST IS A SUPERIOR PERSON TO THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS (1:2b-3)—***“Whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. 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...”***

Jesus Christ not only qualifies to be the supreme revealer of truth because His revelation is superior to the Old Testament prophets but also because His person and work are superior to the Old Testament prophets. Christ has seven credentials to make Him eligible to give a superior revelation to that of the prophets.

Christ Is God’s Appointed Heir

“...whom he has appointed heir of all things...” -- The Father has bestowed the domain of the universe upon His Son, Jesus Christ. All that God is and has belongs to Christ. As the eternal Son, Christ has an eternal heir ship. One could not be appointed heir of all things and not be co-equal with God. Jesus Christ, as heir, owns everything that God owns; therefore He must be equal with God in all things.

“All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to

whom the Son wills to reveal Him (Matt. 11:27).

“I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thy inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Thy possession.’” (Psalm 2:7-8).

Christian, did you know that you are a joint heir with Christ? ***“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him*** (Romans 8:16-17). You will one day inherit all that belongs to Christ. O glorious day!

As heir, Christ qualifies to make the supreme revelation.

Christ Is the Creator

“...through whom also He made the world (ages)...” -- The “ages” consist of the aggregate of all things contained in time. Christ created all things - spiritual and physical in the world of time. He is creator of the dispensations. Because Christ is equal with the Father, the Father created the world through Christ.

“All things came into being through Him; and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” (John 1:3).

“For in Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.” (Col. 1:16).

As Creator, Christ is vastly superior to the Old Testament prophets and is qualified to be the revealer.

Christ Radiates God

“And He is the radiance of His glory” -- The word “radiance” should be translated “out raying” or “effulgence” and speaks of light beaming from a luminous body. Christ does not reflect God, but He flashes forth as intrinsic light because He is God. Jesus Christ radiates the glory of God. God’s glory is the summation of all His attributes or characteristics, and Christ radiates all of these.

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14).

“He who has seen Me has seen the Father...” (John 14:9).

As the radiance of God, Christ is qualified to make the supreme revelation of God.

Christ Is the Substance of God

“and the exact representation of His nature,” -- The word “exact” means to mark or impress with a tool. The word was used when an artist would want to make a mold of something. He would take the original object and press it into the wax or plaster so as to get an exact image of the original. The word later came to mean “exact replica”. The word “representation” means “substance”. Thus Christ in His very nature is the exact replica of the substance of God. Therefore, Christ is God. ***“I and the Father are one”*** (John 10:30).

As God, Christ is qualified to be the revealer.

Christ Is the Sustainer

“and upholds all things by the word of His power.” The word “upholds” means “to carry along” and refers to movement or progress towards a definite goal. Christ is managing or governing all things in God’s program to an appointed end.

The reason we can sit here comfortably in these seats, though our earth is whirling at a furious rate of speed and not be hurled off into space, is simply because Christ sustains the universe. Christ is the secret behind all existence. ***“And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together”*** (Col. 1:17).

Because Christ is the Sustainer, He is qualified to make the supreme revelation.

Christ Is the Redeemer

“When He had made purification (cleansing) of sins”... -- Christ’s superior person gave Him the right to do a superior work. He made a cleansing for our sins. The emphasis is on what Christ did for our sins. He solved the sin problem at the Cross forever. ***“Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself”*** (Heb. 9:26). Christ made a cleansing of sin by himself; He did it voluntarily. Christ, as the Great High Priest, offered Himself as the supreme sacrifice for our sins. Christ’s death made it possible for men to come to God because His work for sin was complete. This is why He cried out on the Cross, ***“It is finished,”*** (John 19:30).

There is no use to reveal God to a helpless sinner unless something is done for that sinner that he might understand the revelation. Christ did do something; He purged our sins.

Christ did not merely promise forgiveness as did the Old Testament prophets, but He actually provided forgiveness in His own death.

Only Christ can forgive our sins and no man can ever remove his own sins. Christ alone is God’s answer to the sin problem.

As the perfect Redeemer, Christ qualifies to make a supreme revelation.

Christ Is the King

“He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” -- Men spurned Christ and put Him on a cross, but God put Him on a throne and gave Him a name above every name. Christ is the King of kings and the Lord of lords! Christ’s ascension to the throne proved that God was well pleased and accepted the death of His Son for sins and sinners. When Christ sat down, it indicated that His work for sin was final and complete. The Old Testament priests never sat down when going through their temple rituals for sin. Why? Because their work was never finished, but Christ died once for all and forever for sin. Having finished his work for sins and being exalted by God, Christ qualifies to be the ultimate in revelation.

Because Christ sits at the right hand of God, ***“all authority in heaven and earth”*** has been committed to Him (Matt. 28:18). In heaven, He sits as King already, even though He has not yet occupied physically the throne of David, as He shall do in the Millennial Kingdom, which is yet to come.

“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this” (Isa. 9:6,7).

Christ is the King. ***“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”*** (1 Tim. 1:17). All of His subjects are to worship, adore and submit to Him! Christ sits on His throne!

CONCLUSION

This world is in tremendous need of redemption and without it men shall face God who is a consuming fire. Jesus Christ is God’s ultimate revelation and we must listen to the Son. Jesus Christ is God’s final sacrifice for sin and the only means of redemption. Apart from Christ, who is the God-Man, and His finished work for sin, no man can be saved. Christ is the author of eternal salvation. ***“And having been made perfect. He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation”*** (Heb. 5:9).

Forgiveness of sin is offered to all, but only those who “obey” Christ shall be saved. They must obey Christ by trusting in Him as Lord and Savior, for God has commanded all men everywhere to repent. Have you obeyed Christ and received Him as your Lord and Savior?