

Introduction to Hebrews

Hebrews 1:1-2

1600

Coming tonight to our first in the first in the series of the book of Hebrews, I have titled the book the Superiority or the Preeminence of Jesus Christ, The Preeminence of Jesus Christ. For in the book of Hebrews that is the message. It is the message of Jesus Christ, superior to every thing and everybody. Now tonight we're going to come to an introduction to Hebrews and the introduction to Hebrews is really the first three verses. But before we look at those verses, I want to make a few remarks that we need to make as a foundation for what we're going to study.

Tonight, I believe we're going to come to one of the most unusual adventures that you've ever been through. And that's adventuring through the book of Hebrews. This is a tremendous book. It is a difficult book. It is a book that has many, many deep truths, difficult to understand. Lest we really be diligent and faithful in our study.

There are things here that are beyond the understanding apart from a deep knowledge of the spirit of God and a commitment to understand the word of God in total. My former Old Testament professor Dr. Feinburg who also taught the book of Hebrews, and I took his course, said that you cannot understand the book of Hebrews unless you understand the book of Leviticus, because the book of Hebrews is based upon the principles of the Levitical priesthood.

Now don't get panicky and worry about your lack of understanding of Leviticus. By the time we get through Hebrews in a few years you will...you will have a pretty good grasp on Leviticus along with it. We'll try to give a little as we go. But it might be well if you just familiarize yourself with Leviticus to some degree.

Now, this particular Epistle was written by an unknown author, some say, some say Apollos, some say Peter, some say this, that, and the other thing. I stand with one of the great teachers of the early church by the name of origin who said nobody knows. And so all the way through we will make reference to the fact that it was written by the Holy Spirit, that we do know. I do not believe it was written by Paul. It was written by this unknown author to a suffering, persecuted group of Jews somewhere in the east. Not in Israel, but outside of Israel.

There are no references to Gentiles in the book. The problem of Gentile and Jew together in the church is not here indicating that the little congregation to which he's writing was strictly Jewish or there was no Gentile conflict. And to this persecuted suffering group of Jewish believers and unbelievers, he writes to reveal the merits of Jesus Christ and the new covenant as opposed to the old covenant.

Now we do not know the exact location of these Hebrews, somewhere near Greece perhaps, but we

do know that this Jewish community had been evangelized by the apostles and the prophets. And it had been evangelized evidently fairly early after Christ had lived and died and risen again. And by the time the letter to the Hebrews is written, there already exists a little group, a little local congregation of believers. And included in the same view of the letter are unbelievers who evidently are also a part of this little Jewish community.

Now unlike Jerusalem Jews or Galilee Jews, they had never met Jesus. Everything they knew about him they got secondhand. They really didn't even have any New Testament writings as such, for it hadn't been put together. Obviously, the book of Hebrews wasn't even a part of yet. And so whatever they knew, they knew directly from the mouths of the apostles and the prophets. And by prophets, I mean New Testament prophets.

So they were kind of second generation Christians as a result of apostolic missionaries. You say well when was the letter written. Well, it had to be written sometime after Christ's ascension, which would have been about 30 A.D., and sometime before the destruction of Jerusalem, which would have been 70 A.D., because Jerusalem is still standing at this point in the letter. So it's got to be between 30 and 70. Now I believe it's probably pretty close to the 70's, somewhere between 60 and 69, likely about 65.

Because there had to be time for the apostolic missionaries to get going and we know that there weren't really any apostolic missionaries from Jerusalem until at least seven years after the church had been founded there. And likely it was sometime later that they would have reached this little Jewish community. And also after they had been reached, they had to have a certain amount of time to grow spiritually, because in Chapter 5, verse 12, the Holy Spirit says to them, and I'll read you the statement. "For when for the time as long as it's been you ought to be teachers. You have need that one teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God."

In other words, he says you've had enough time to be mature, but instead you're not. So it had to be sometime after the apostolic missionaries would go out, establish the little congregation and then they would have sufficient time to have matured spiritually. So very likely it would be close to 70 as I say, perhaps about 65. So it was still in that first century. They were still close to the fire in terms of the life of Jesus Christ, though they had never met Him.

Now here is the very critical basis for understanding the book, and this is where people get all messed up, especially interpreting Hebrews Chapter 6. We must understand that there were three basic types of people in view throughout this Epistle. Three basic types of people. If you do not understand these three basic types of people then it becomes very confusing. If for example as some have said it was all written to Christians, the entire thing was written to Christians, then you have monstrous problems.

It cannot be written to unbelievers because it talks about the believers too much. So it must be written to a combination and indeed there are evidently three basic types in this little Jewish community to which the writer of the Epistle writes, group 1, Hebrew Christians. There was in this little community and a legitimate congregation of true believers in Jesus Christ. They had come out of Judaism. They had been founded and raised in it. They were born again. They had received Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. They had become followers of Jesus Christ and naturally the result of that was a tremendous hostility from their own people. Ostracized from their family, persecuted and suffering though they never died. Hebrews points that out. They still suffered greatly.

Persecuted not only by their own countrymen, the Jews, the evidently also perhaps by Gentiles. They should have known better. They should have been mature, they weren't. They had no confidence. They were in danger of going back into the patterns of Judaism. Not in danger of losing their salvation, but in danger of confusing their salvation with legalism, you see. They couldn't make a clear cut break between the New Testament and the new covenant in Christ and all the forms and ceremonies and patterns and methods of their old life in Judaism. And they were having a hard time with this problem. They were still hung up for example in the temple ritual and temple worship. And that's why Jesus keeps talking to them about a new priesthood and a new kind of temple and a new kind of sacrifice and a new kind of sanctuary that's better than the old one, because they were still hung up on that old one.

They had gone beyond Judaism in receiving Jesus Christ, but they were still hanging on to many of the Judaistic habits that had been so much a part of their life, and it's understandable. And especially when their own friends and their own countrymen begin to really persecute them and let them have it. They tend to feel the pressure of this and to hold even tighter to some of the old Jewish traditions to at least have a foothold on their relationships to their own people. It was a very hard thing to make a clean break.

And so with all of that pressure and their weak faith and their spiritual ignorance, they were in great danger of mixing the new with the old. They were in great danger of coming up with a ritualistic, ceremonial, legalistic Christianity. They were a whole a congregation of Romans 14 weaker brothers. So the Holy Spirit then directs this letter to them to strengthen their faith in the new covenant. To show them that they did not need the old temple, they did not need, which incidentally in a matter of a few years would be wiped out by Titus vespasian anyway showing that God brought an end to that whole economy.

They did not need the old ironic priest and levitical priest. They did not need the old day in day out, day in day out sacrifices. They had a new and better covenant with a new and better priesthood, a new and better sanctuary, a new and better sacrifice all the way down the line. And so it is written then to give confidence to these floundering believers that he is speaking to Christians and telling them to hang on to the better covenant, the better priesthood and not go back into the patterns of Judaism. Either to that priesthood or to that assemblage. But to maintain that new relationship.

So the first group in view then are Hebrew Christians. Second group Hebrew non-Christians who are intellectually convinced. Do you know those kind? People who know the truth, but have never committed themselves to it. You've met many people like that haven't you. Who've heard the truth of Jesus Christ, they believe it, they're intellectually convinced that Christ is indeed who he claimed to be but they're not willing to make a commitment of faith to him.

And so in this little particular group there are some of those. Hebrew non-Christians as there are in every group. These are common through every kind of group. There are those people who are here tonight. People who are convinced that Jesus is the Christ, but have never committed themselves to Him. And so these Hebrew non-Christians intellectually convinced are the object of some of the things that the writer has to say.

They believe that Jesus was the Messiah, but they had not been willing to receive Him personally.

Why? Just like those in the gospel of John. It says they believed on Him, but they loved the praise of men, what, more than the praise of God. They weren't willing to make the sacrifice. And so these particular ones are exhorted by the Holy Spirit in the book of Hebrews to go all the way to saving faith. To go all the way to commitment. Let me show, Chapter 2, verse 1 is one of these particular statements to this group of intellectually convinced uncommitted.

2:1, "Therefore we ought to give them more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip," right? Verse 2, "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast and every transgression and disobedience receive the just recompensive reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation. See, they were at the point of believing it but not committing to it. And the great sin of neglecting to do what they had been intellectually convinced was right. He says, you ought to know better. It's all to be confirmed by the apostles with all the miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, verse 4.

Look at Chapter 6, here it comes again. "For it is impossible for those," verse 4, "For it is impossible for those who are once enlightened." You know what the word enlightened means? It doesn't mean saved, it means intellectually convinced. For those who were once intellectually convinced tasted the heavenly gift partakers of the Holy Spirit "tasted the good word of God, the powers of the age to come if they shall fall away it's impossible to renew them again in a repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame."

Now there's a warning to the intellectually convinced not to stop, because if he stops for the total revelation, if he stops when he's convinced he has only one way to go, if when a man is totally convinced that Jesus Christ is who He claimed to be, he refused to believe the man is hopeless. Because he's convinced that it's true and he still won't do it. Nothing else God can do. So He warns.

The same thing appears...well, let's just look at 10:26, we'll skip one of them. Look at 10:26, now what is the greatest sin that a man can commit? What is it? The sin of rejecting Christ isn't it? Look at verse 26. "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." If a man has the truth, receives it, understands it, is intellectually convinced and willfully rejects Christ, what can God do? Nothing. This is another warning to the Hebrew non-Christian intellectually convinced.

Verse 27, "But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries." That's what you're going to look for. Now look at verse 29. "Of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God and hath counted the blood of the covenant with which he was sanctified an unholy thing and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace."

In other words, when you know the truth and you reject it, the sorer punishment will be yours. Chapter 12, verse 15 we see another one. Chapter 12:15, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God. Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you and by it many be defiled. Lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For ye know how afterward when he would have inherited the blessing he was rejected for he found no place of repentance though he sought it with tears." The tragedy of too little too late. This is again a warning to the convinced individual who has never made a commitment to Christ.

The third group in view in the book of Hebrews and you can look at Chapter 9 for the illustration as long as you're at the end of the book are Hebrew non-Christians who weren't convinced. Just the nation Israel in general. The Holy Spirit also in this book, not only does He want to speak to the Christians and strengthen their faith, but He wants to speak to intellectually convinced and push them over the line to faith, but He also wants to speak to those who haven't believed at all yet who aren't convinced of anything and give them enough information to show them that Jesus is in fact who He claimed to be, and that's what happens in Chapter 9.

In Chapter 9 he speaks directly to those. For example, in verse 11 he says, "But Christ being come and high priest of good things to come by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands." That is to say not of this building. And he goes on down to explain Christ's new priesthood. Verse 14, "How much more shall the blood of Christ who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God purge your conscious from dead works to serve the living God. And for this cause He is the mediator of the New Testament that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they who were called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

Verse 27, "And as it is appointed after...unto men once to die, but after this the judgment so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

Now those are messages given to one who is an unbeliever, not to a Christian and not to one who is necessarily convinced intellectually, but to that one who needs to know who Christ really is. And there are many other such illustrations. So there are three groups then in view in the Epistle. And the key to interpreting Hebrews my friend is to understand to which group he is speaking. And if we don't understand that then we mess everything up because we confuse the issue. He is not saying to believers it is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment, is he?

We must understand what group it is to whom he speaks. Now all the way through as we study the book of Hebrews we will be relating each text to particular groups. The flow of the text is to the believers. Periodically there are warnings to these unbelieving groups. These two groups of unbelievers, the intellectually convinced and the unconvinced. And in a masterful, in a way that could only be done by a divine mind, the Holy Spirit pulls these three groups together and meets everyone of their particular needs and their particular questions and the particular issue in the very same letter.

In the book of Hebrews there is confidence and assurance to the Christian. In the book of Hebrews there is warning to the intellectually convinced that He must receive Christ or his knowledge will damn him. And finally there is a convincing presentation to the unbelieving Jew who is not intellectually convinced that he indeed should and should believe in Jesus Christ.

And thus to do this was Hebrews written. It is simply then, mark it, a presentation of Christ, the Messiah, the author of a new covenant, greater than the old one that God had made in the Old Testament. Not that the old one was wrong, it was only incomplete. Now the theme of the book then is the superiority or the preeminence of Christ. That He is better than anything they've got. That He is better than anything that is. He's better than the Old Testament persons. He's better than the Old Testament institutions. He's better than the Old Testament rituals. He's better than the Old Testament sacrifices. He's better than everything.

A general outline of the book of Hebrews which shows you the pattern of presenting the superiority of Jesus Christ and I'm just going to go down the pattern. We'll follow it loosely as we study the book. It begins with the superiority of Christ to everyone and everything. And that's a kind of a summary of the whole book in the first three verses, which we'll get to in a minute. Secondly, the superiority of Christ to angels. The superiority of Christ to Moses, the superiority of Christ to Joshua, the superiority of Christ to Aaron and his priesthood. The superiority of Christ to the old covenant. The superiority of Christ's sacrifice to old sacrifices. The superiority of Christ's faithful to all faithless. The superiority of Christ's testimony to the testimony of any other.

Now that little outline gives you the flow of the book which teaches the superiority of Jesus Christ. Now, let me just give you a couple of footnotes and then we'll look at the verses. To the Jew it had always been a dangerous thing to approach God. No man shall see my face and live. And on the great day of atonement, Yom Kippur, which Jews still keep to one degree or another, the great day of atonement which occurred one time a year, at that time and that time alone could the high priest enter into the holy of holies where the Shekinah glory dwelt where God's presence was. They could not see God. They could not behold God. They could not get near God except for one day a year and only one guy could do it and he had to get in there and get it done and get out of there. He didn't stay around a long time.

In fact, the Bible says "He could not linger there lest he put Israel in terror." But in this kind of a situation where there was no nearness to God, there had to be, stay with me, there had to be a basis for some relationship between God and Israel. So God established a covenant. And a covenant meant that God in His grace and in His sovereign initiative began the nation Israel and then offered to Israel a special relationship with himself. In a very unique way he would their God and they would be his people.

They would have a special access to him if they were obedient to his laws. And to break the law was sin and sin interrupted the access to God and since there was always sin, the access was always interrupted. And so God instituted a system of sacrifices. The whole Levitical priesthood, all the priests that ministered in Israel and all the sacrifices were to atone for sin that the barrier might be taken down and there might be access to God. It kind of worked like this, God gave His covenant, He gave His law. He said you could have access. Man sinned, so he broke the covenant, the barrier went up, the sacrifice was made for sin that dropped the barrier so that that relationship could be consummated.

You say, well, how many times did they have to make the sacrifice? They had to do it incisively, hour after hour after hour after hour, day after day, month after month, year after year, they never stopped. And to make things worse, the priest were all sinners too and they had to go through a whole rigmarole of making sacrifices for their own sins to get themselves in shape to make sacrifices for the sins of the people. And so the barrier went up and down, up and down, up and down.

And of course, this is proof of the ineffectiveness of the whole system. It was a losing battle to preserve the barrier or to remove the barrier. And what man needed was a perfect priest and a perfect sacrifice who could open the way once and for all. Some kind of a sacrifice that didn't just deal with one sin, one sin, one sin, but something that just took it all away at once.

They needed a perfect priest to bear that perfect sacrifice. And that says the writer of Hebrews is exactly what Jesus was and what He did. And so He comes the mediator of a better covenant, because its one that doesn't have to be repeated every hour. He comes as the mediator of a better covenant, because His sacrifice covers every sin ever committed once and for all. He comes as the mediator of a better covenant, because He's a priest who doesn't need to make any sacrifices for himself. He's totally perfect. The perfect priest and the perfect sacrifice.

And Jesus Christ, in His own sacrifice, showed the perfection that eliminated sin. In Hebrews 10, verse 10, "By which will we are sanctified," that is made pure, "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ," what's the next word, "once." And that italics doesn't need to be there. "Through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." Now friends that's something new in the sacrificial system. One sacrifice did it. That's a better covenant.

Verse 12, "But this man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down." Now that's something no priest could ever do. There weren't even any seats. They had to keep making sacrifice. Jesus made one and sat down and that meant it's done. Verse 14, "For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." There is a better priest making a better sacrifice.

And you see this is the message of the book of Hebrews to the Jewish people. To the believer he's saying have confidence in it. To the intellectually convinced, receive it. You're right on the borderline, don't fall into perdition when you're only a step away. And to the unbeliever he says look at it, how much better it is to receive Christ.

The writer is saying all your lives you Jews have been looking for the perfect priest. You've been looking for the perfect final sacrifice. I present Him to you, Jesus Christ. And so the preeminence or the superiority of Christ over all others is the theme of the book of Hebrews. Now keep in mind that this is not easy for the Jews to accept. It's extremely difficult for them to accept the superiority of the new covenant. And it's especially hard for them to make a clean break with the old. Now the Gentiles didn't have that kind of a problem because for long centuries the Gentiles hadn't believed in much of anything consistent anyway.

They had long ago lost the knowledge of the true God and in consequence for worshiping idols and so forth and so on, but keep this mind, the Jews always had a divine religion. They always had a divinely appointed place of worship. God had established their religion. It wasn't like going to a Gentile and saying here's the truth. When you went to a Jew and said hear the truth, he said well I already know the truth, but this is from God. But so is that. And it was not an easy thing to make that transition.

Keep that in mind, to be called on to forsake completely all the heritage that it was God authored was not easy. And even among those who were saved it was difficult. It was a natural desire for a Christian Jew to retain some of the forms and some of the ceremonies that were a part of his life when he was brought up and that is part of the problem of the book of Hebrews, trying to confront that born again Jew with the fact that he can let go of all of that stuff.

And it was especially hard for them since the temple still stood and the priests still ministered. It got easier after the temple was destroyed in 70 A. D. And then in add to that the intense persecution that they were going through it and it was really rough. In fact, the high priest Ananias really let them

have it. They were all banished. Any Christian Jew was automatically banished from the holy places. That's tough. That's in their own country.

All their lives they had access, they couldn't even take part in God appointed services. They were unclean. They couldn't go to the temple. They couldn't go to the altar. They couldn't go to the sacrifices, they couldn't communicate with the priests, and they had nothing to do with their own people. They were cut off from their society. They were unsynagogued. And by clinging to the Messiah, they had been banished from everything they'd ever known. And they were considered worse than Gentiles. Though they were the only true Jews at all. For a Jew is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but one who is one inwardly.

And so they were beginning to say themselves, boy this is rough. I mean, we heard this from these guys who'd never seen Christ and I mean, we received Him, we believe this deal, but boy it's tough to make this break in the persecution and all of the traditions that they've always held and is this really the Messiah and doubts would come into their minds and it was a problem. And they were so spiritually infantile in their own concepts that they really didn't have any resources to fall back on.

So throughout the book of Hebrews he speaks to these beloved Christians and tells them to put their confidence in the new covenant. Put your confidence in Christ, the mediator of a better covenant, the new, great high priest. And he reminds them that they weren't losing something, they were just getting something better, that's all. They had been deprived of an earthly temple, but they were going to get a heavenly one. They had been deprived of an earthly priesthood, but they had a heavenly priest. They had been deprived of the pattern of sacrifices, but they had one final sacrifice.

And so in the book everything presented is presented as a better thing and you'll find these phrases in the book of Hebrews. A better hope, a better testament, a better promise, better sacrifice, better substance, better country, better resurrection, and the better thing. And Jesus Christ is presented there and we are presented as being in him dwelling in a new kind of dimension, the heavenly. And so we reading Hebrews a heavenly Christ, a heavenly calling, the heavenly gift, the heavenly country, the heavenly Jerusalem, and our names are written in the heavenly.

Everything is new. Everything is better. We don't need the old. And if you want to get a summary of the book of Hebrews, it's Chapter 8, verse 1. And it even tells us it's a summary. It says this, "Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum." Here is the whole summary of Hebrews in one verse, in one sentence for that matter. "We have such a high priest who is seated on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens." There's the wrap up on Hebrews right there. We have some kind of high priest. Who needs that old economy at all. And the significance of it is a high priest whose seated means his work is what? Is done. It's done.

All right, now those are some scattered footnotes to introduce you to the book. Just keep in mind the three groups and that the point is to show all three groups that Christ is better than anything in the Old Testament, that the new covenant is better than the old and that they can let the rest go because of everything they have in Christ is infinitely sufficient. Now this writer doesn't fool around getting to his point. He hits it bang in the first chapter and the first verse. And we'll look at these three verses and they're very simple, we'll consider them.

They tell us that Christ is superior to everyone and everything. He starts out at the top. He doesn't

build up to it. He just bangs away right at the beginning. And this is kind of a...really gathers the theme of the whole Epistle. Now I want you to see three features here. The preparation for Christ, the presentation of Christ, and the preeminence of Christ.

The preparation for Christ, the presentation of Christ, and the preeminence of Christ. Now keep in mind all through the book he's presenting Christ as better as than everything else, better than the Old Testament, better than the old covenant. Let's look first of all at the preparation for Christ in verse 1.

"God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." We'll stop there. Now that gives us an indication of how God wrote the Old Testament. And the Old Testament has its purpose to prepare for the coming of Christ, whether in prophecy or type or principle or commandment or whatever, it was preparation for Christ. And you see the marvelous senses of man as marvelous as they are, are incapable of reaching beyond the natural world. And if we're ever going to know anything about God, God must speak.

Look at it verse 1. "God," the middle of the verse, "spoke." Right there. We would never know God if He didn't speak. Now I've always illustrated it very simple. You can't crawl out of your natural box and discover God. You can't do it. You and I live in a natural box. Just imagine a little box. And you and I run around this little natural box and it's all time space existence. And outside of our natural box is the supernatural. And somewhere down inside of us, we know it's out there, but we really don't know anything about it, you see.

So people come along and say we must discover the supernatural. Let's start a religion. And so they all run over to the edge of the box and get their chisels and start poking a hole in the edge of the box figuring they can poke a hole, crawl out, and find God. He'll be sitting on a cloud with a sign "Hi, I'm God where have you been?"

And that's what happens. The Buddhists say you go over here and you do whatever you do and you give Buddha the porridge and you do the thing and you go through all of the things or whatever Buddhism is involved and think yourself and then nirvana and then and all of sudden you've popped out of the box and discovered God. You've transcended from the natural to the supernatural.

And then Muhammad doesn't say this, and all the other religions or astronismsays this and whether its in Japan, Soko Gakiah, whether it's this or whatever it is, it's all the same attempt to escape the natural end of the supernatural. And whether it's a cult or whatever it is. Get out of the box, but the problem is you can't get out. By the very definition of terms that natural man cannot escape into the supernatural. It can't happen. I always say you can't go into a phone booth and take off your clothes. Well, you can do that, but you can't come out Superman, that's the point.

You cannot transcend your natural existence. So then if you are to know anything about God, you will not know because you escape to God. You will only know it because God speaks to you. Do you get that? You cannot discover God anymore than I expect the bug that I hold in my hand to understand me. He does not understand me. Bugs don't understand anybody. And bugs probably have terrific philosophies about what we're like. And they may even worship some of us, but the don't know.

And the problem is we can't even condescend to their level, but God could. And so God literally became a man and burst into the box to tell us about Himself and that's what revelation is all about isn't it? And don't you see that every religion in the world is a backward situation because every religion in the world is man's attempt to jump out of the box. There's only one religion in the world that's the opposite and that's Christianity which says for the Son of man has come to seek and to save. And when God burst into the box, He did it in a human form. And the name of that human form was Jesus Christ.

And that's the difference between Christianity and every other religion in the world. That's why people say well you can believe anything you want, any religion you want. No, you can't. Every religion is man's attempt to discover God. Christianity is God bursting into man's world and telling Him what He was like. And so man is sensorially incapable of comprehending, identifying, or understanding God at all. God must invade his world, and so God spoke.

And God first spoke through the words of the Old Testament. Now you know that men didn't write it. They were used as instruments, but God was behind it the energizing author. Deity is not speechless. The deists for years have thought that God started the world going and then went away on a vacation and letting it unwind. God is not speechless. God is not detached. God is not uninvolved. The true and living God unlike the idols of the heathen is no dumb being. The God of Scripture unlike the impersonal first cause of philosophers and evolutionists is not silent. He speaks.

And He spoke in the Old Testament. And this is a great passage supporting divine inspiration of the Old Testament. My friends, the Old Testament is not the wisdom of man, it is the voice of whom? Of God. Now notice how He spoke. "God who at sundry times and in diverse manners." This is kind of a nice little play on words here by the writer. He says God palumaras and palutripas, and those two words are interesting. They mean in many portions, that means in different books and in many different manners.

Now you know there are many books in the Old Testament right? In fact, you know how many don't you? Thirty-nine, you knew that. And in all those many portions, palumaras, there it says sundry times, it means many portions, and in many different manners. That is sometimes God spoke directly to a man totally right, didn't He?

Sometimes in a vision. Sometimes in a parable. Sometimes through a type or a symbol. Oh there are all different kinds of ways in which God spoke in the Old Testament, but it's always God speaking. Now men were used and their personalities were used and their minds were used, but they were totally controlled by the Spirit of God so that every word they said was the word that God decided that they should say and delighted in them saying.

Some of the Old Testament is history. Some of it is poetry and beautiful Hebrew meter. Some of it is law. Some of it is prophecy. But it is all God speaking. And it was fragmentary in the Old Testament, it was incomplete. Came over 1,500 years by all those 40 plus writers, all in different bits and pieces. Each one with an element of truth and it began to build. And the Old Testament my friends is what we call progressive revelation. You can't read all the truth of the Old Testament in Genesis. Genesis gives some, Exodus gives some, and it builds and it builds and it builds and it builds. It's progressive revelation.

It does not go from error to truth. It goes from incompleteness to a more completedness. It's still incomplete until the New Testament. So in the Old Testament, God was pleased then for that time to dispense His gracious truth to the Jews by the mouths of His prophets in all different manners. Carrying His revelation from a lesser degree of light to a greater degree, progressively.

Now let me add this, because I want you to understand it. That does not mean that what's in the Old Testament is wrong. It is not wrong. There is a development, however, in the Old Testament even of the morality standards until they're totally refined in Jesus. God gave a progressive revelation. The distinction is not in the nature of the truth, it's in the amount of it and the time of it.

Just like children are first taught the letters and then they worry about the words and then they worry about the sentences. That's how God gave His revelation. It began with the spelling book of types and ceremonies and prophecies and it progresses to the final completion in Christ.

Now let me add this, that even though God spoke in many ways, in many parts, it's not a hodge-podge. It's not smattered with a lot of human opinion like so many people try to tell you. Tell you that men wrote the Bible. It's all God spoke. Now notice and we'll go on from there, because we've talked a lot about inspiration, "God who at sundry times and diverse manners spoke in time past." Now that sets the picture for us. Back in the past. "Unto the fathers," that's our ancestors, Old Testament people, spiritual ancestors, or physical if you happen to be Jewish. He even spoke to some of our Gentile ancestors. "He spoke unto them by the prophets," and they were His messengers.

A prophet is one who speaks to men for God. A priest is one who speaks to God for men. That's the difference. The priest took the man's problem into God, the prophet took God's message to men, that's the distinction. So the Holy Spirit then establishes in verse 1, the accuracy of the Old Testament and its divine authorship. Now all throughout the New Testament, this is a firm, for example. Two verses and I'll just give them to you, 1 Peter...2 Peter, I mean, 1:21.

"For the prophecy," talking of the Old Testament, "came not at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." Nobody in that Old Testament wrote it of their own will. Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, 2 Peter 1:21. Now in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is given by," what, "inspiration of God." All Scripture." And the revised standard perversion says all Scripture which is given by God. And they just gently throw that which is in there.

Not all Scripture which is, all Scripture is. Who's going to decide which which is which? So the Old Testament is true and the Old Testament was the progressive preparation for Jesus Christ. All right, so we see the preparation for Christ. Secondly, the presentation of Christ in verse 2. "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Now there it is. Tremendous. That's the finalizing of the revelation.

God who used to speak in many ways, in many forms, to many people has finally spoken in one way through one individual, Jesus Christ. And do you know that the whole New Testament is centered around Christ? The gospels give His story and the Epistles all comment on it and the revelation tells where its going. It's all Christ, all of it from beginning to end of the New Testament is Christ.

"Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." Did you know that no prophet has grasped the

whole truth? Only Jesus is the whole truth. The Old Testament was bits and pieces in fragments. Jesus is full and final revelation. Now notice a little phrase there in these last days. There's several ways to interpret that. He could be saying in the last days of revelation. He could be saying that this is the final revelation, it is the final revelation, no question about that in Christ, there's nothing else to add to it. But He could be saying in the last days of revelation it came through His Son.

But better than that, I think He is making a messianic reference here, because the phrase "the last days," to the Jew was very, very familiar. And since He's writing Jews, we will take it in that context. Whenever the Jews saw the phrase last days, He immediately had messianic thoughts, because the promise was that in the last days Messiah would come. In the latter days Messiah would come. And so He is saying in those promised last days when Messiah came Jesus was that Messiah and He spoke the final revelation of God.

You know that was the last days when Jesus came. Unfortunately they rejected the Messiah and so the fulfillment of all of the promises of the last days had to be postponed and the Grace Church age intervened, we know that. And so then a familiar phrase to the Jews in the last days in messianic days, God spoke by His Son. First He spoke in words and then He spoke in a person, Jesus Christ His Son.

In John 4:25, I read these words, "The woman saith unto him," this is the woman at the well, Sikarh, "I know that Messiah cometh who is called Christ." Now listen to what she expected. "When He is come, He will tell us all things." She knew that when Messiah arrived He would unfold the full and final revelation of God and indeed He did. Indeed He did. And my friends to add anything to the New Testament is blasphemous.

To come along and add when you're going to add to it the book of Mormon or science and health and the key to the Scriptures or anything else that claims to be revelation from God is blasphemous. "Hath in these last days finalized His revelation in His Son," and that ended it. The end of the book of Revelation says you add anything to it and shall be added unto you the plagues. Take anything away and the same thing will result.

God's final revelation was made in one greater than the prophets, Jesus Christ. All the Old Testament came in pieces. To Noah was revealed the quarter of the world from which Messiah would come. To Abraham, the nation of Messiah. To Jacob, the tribe of Messiah. To David and Isaiah, the family of Messiah. To Micah, the town where He born. To Daniel, the time when He'd be born. To Malachi, the forerunner who would come before him. To Jonah, his resurrection was typified and everyone of those pieces and bits come together. But in Jesus Christ, everything was whole in total. And the revelation was full and complete.

And so is established the priority of Jesus Christ. He is greater than the prophets. He is greater than any revelation in the Old Testament for He is that embodied. God has fully expressed Himself in Christ. I think we'll stop here and next time we'll see verses 2 and 3. We're going to have to go faster than that.

We'll see verses 2 and 3 the preeminence of Christ. This is a very important part so we want to get this anyway. Keep this in mind the Holy Spirit then, mark it, establishes in verse 2 the superiority of Christ over all the Old Testament prophets. First in character, because the Old was fragmentary, the

New is perfect. Second, the new covenant is better even because of the instrument. The Old was sinful men, the New was the Son of God. Third, He spoke in time past and now He speaks in these last days. This is final. The full of expression of God's revelation.

So immediately in the first verse and a half, the Holy Spirit establishes the preeminence of Jesus Christ over all the Old Testament. And this just what these dear Christian believers and these unbelieving Hebrews need to hear, the superiority of Christ. And let me say this in closing to you tonight, some of you here perhaps have never met Jesus Christ as your Savior. Maybe you put your faith in a lot of things. Maybe you put your faith in money. Maybe you put your faith in popularity, prestige, success. Jesus Christ is superior to anything and...anything and everything.

Peter said, "Neither is there salvation in any other for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." There is no other way to God. Jesus Christ is superior to any method, any religion, any kind of philosophy, anything that exists. Jesus Christ is superior. He is the preeminent one, and unless an man puts his faith in Jesus Christ that man is doomed. For it is Christ alone who is God's revelation and God's redeemer.

Our Father we thank you just for letting us get started tonight and lay some ground work. Lord, I just am thrilled and excited already about next week because I know we're going to talk about the preeminence of Christ. We're going to go through that catalog of the seven glories of the preeminent Christ and Lord I just thrill when I see the magnificence of your Son. And I rejoice when I know He loves me and dwells within me.

Father, I pray tonight that all of us would see Jesus Christ high and lifted up. That we would be drawn to Him. Father, we thank you that the Bible is not something that was written by men, but by the Spirit of God. Lord, may we receive the message tonight that you wanted to give to those Hebrew Christians. If we're believers Father, but our faith is wavering and we fall back into old patterns. And we have a lack of confidence, may we be reminded again that Jesus Christ is king of kings and Lord of Lords.

That in the world we shall have tribulation, but He is overcome the world. That we belong to Him and nothing can ever change that and some day He will raise us up at the last day to be His in glory forever. May we never lose confidence. And oh Father, I pray and I warn in my own way and through the word of God those who are convinced that Jesus is the Christ, but unwilling to make that commitment. Father, how tragic, how much sorer punishment shall be theirs for treading on the blood of Christ when they knew better.

And the Father, I pray for those who are here like those in that Jewish community who really don't believe anything, that they'll see the beauty of Jesus Christ, the truth of the word of God, that they'll come to a saving knowledge of Him. Father as we close the service tonight, speak to us. Do your perfect work in our hearts. Thank you for teaching us tonight. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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