

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 2 May 2021. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Christ Is Superior to the Prophets

Hebrews 1:1-3

This morning, we will begin a series of messages from the **book of Hebrews**. As we study this epistle, you will see many wonderful portraits of the Lord Jesus Christ. You will see Him portrayed as the Son of God, and as Messiah, Prophet, Heir, Creator, Representative, Mediator, Upholder of all things, High Priest, and King. You will understand *salvation* at a depth that you have never understood it before. You will also understand the purpose of the *Old Testament* at a depth that have never understood it before.

Now, who is the author of the book of **Hebrews**? I can't give you any particular chapter and verse to answer that question, because the author of Hebrews never identified himself by name. However, it is obvious that the author of this letter is the Apostle Paul. The style of **Hebrews** is Paul's style; and some of the statements that are made at the end of the letter clearly indicate that this letter was written by Paul, from the city of Rome, during his house arrest, sometime around A.D. 65.

Now, the most important thing to realise about the book of **Hebrews** is *to whom* the book was written, and *why* it was written. If you don't know whose mail you are reading, you can misunderstand some parts of this book. In fact, you can easily fall into *doctrinal error about salvation* if you do not take these things into account! Thus, before we begin this message, I would like to take a few moments to explain the "who" and "why" of this book.

First, let's talk about Paul's audience. To whom was he writing? Paul wrote this letter to professing Jewish believers in Jesus Christ; and he wrote this letter just a few years before the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. Now, as I said, these people were "*professing*" Jewish believers. That word "professing" is key. You see, most of the people in Paul's audience were saved; but not *all* of them were saved. For this reason, Paul had to address each of these two groups, in two very different ways.

To those who were saved, Paul wrote this letter to encourage them. These believers were weary from the persecution they were enduring for their faith in Christ; and they needed encouragement. They needed to be reminded that their labour for Christ was *not* in vain. They needed to be encouraged to remain steadfast and unmovable. To these *true* Christians, Paul said that he was "*persuaded better things*" of them, "*and things that accompany salvation.*" In other words, Paul was confident that even though these believers were weary and troubled by persecution, they would *not* forsake their Lord.

However, there were also some in Paul's audience who had never truly been saved. They had made a *profession* of faith in Christ; yet, they had never truly trusted in Him. Consequently, when persecution arose for the sake of Jesus' name, they were soon ready to abandon their profession of faith in Jesus, and to turn back to the empty shell of Judaism. The fact is, these people never truly knew Christ; and Paul was writing to warn them that if they decided to *draw back* from Christ, after having come right up to the threshold of salvation, then the only thing they had to look forward to was damnation.

Brethren, we need to understand this fact! We must realise that there were many in Paul's audience who had *never truly belonged to Jesus*. Why is this so important to understand? Because there are people

who would have you believe that a genuine Christian can “draw back” from Christ, and *lose* his salvation; and they often use passages in **Hebrews** to “prove” it. What they fail to understand is that these Jews who had “drawn back” from their profession were *not* genuine believers. They never were. They were *falsely professing* believers who had stopped just short of crossing over the threshold of salvation.

Now, in order to encourage the true believers, and to warn the false believers, Paul spent this whole letter **demonstrating why Jesus is superior** to everything that they, as Jews, had ever known and loved. Thirteen times in this letter, Paul used the word “**better**.” He pointed out that Jesus is “**better**” than the prophets; that He is “**better**” than all the angels; and that He is “**better**” than Moses, Aaron, and the Old Testament priesthood. He also showed how the New Covenant is “**better**” than the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant was full of *types* of the coming Messiah; but Jesus *is* the Messiah. The Old Covenant was full of *shadows* of salvation; but Jesus *is* Salvation. Jesus is the Saviour who *cast* all those “shadows”! Everything that God promised in the Old Testament is fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ!

This morning we are going to look at the first point that Paul made about Jesus’ superiority. The title of this message is ***Christ Is Superior to the Prophets***.

Read Hebrews 1:1-3.

In these verses, Paul starts off by showing us how Jesus is superior to the prophets of the Old Testament. In this passage, we will first examine the *prophets’* ministry; and then, we will look at *Jesus’* ministry.

I. The ministry of the prophets (v. 1)

Right at the beginning of this letter, Paul is reminding his Jewish brethren about a body of men whom they and their fathers highly revered. They are called “***the prophets***.” (**Read verse 1 again.**) Brethren, it is hard to overestimate how important the prophets were to the Jewish people. In their minds, the prophets towered over them like spiritual giants. Why? Because the prophets were specially chosen by God to deliver His words to them! Over a period of at least 2,000 years, God had given His message to these men by divine inspiration. He moved them to write down His exact words, and to ensure that every jot and tittle was copied meticulously, and preserved. The prophets had undeniable authority from Heaven.

God’s true prophets were nothing like the so-called “prophets” that we see in many religions today. In one major religion, for example, the people are told that the President of their organization (whoever he happens to be at the time) is the “Prophet” of their day; and whatever he says is truth. Even if their “Prophet” should happen to contradict the Bible, his word is still to be regarded as truth. If their “Prophet” should contradict what *other previous “Prophets”* of their religion have said, his word is still to be regarded as the truth. In fact, if their current “Prophet” contradicts what their own founder said, or even what their holy book says, they are still to regard the current “Prophet’s” word as truth!

The same is true of another fast-growing religion of our day, which began back in the late 1800’s. The followers of this religion are told that their organisation’s literature is just as authoritative as Scripture. In fact, they are told that every one of their publications is *new, fresh* Scripture. According to them, the leaders of their organisation are modern-day “apostles”; and the things that they write for their publications are given to them by angels. Yet, there is a problem: many times down through the years, their organisation has made embarrassingly false prophecies. In fact, some of their errors have been so massive, that they had to change a major doctrine of their religion in order to explain it away. Yet, their

“apostles” never blush, or admit their error. They simply explain that the light of truth is getting “brighter” as the time of the end draws nearer.

So-called “prophets” and “apostles” on the telly and internet are constantly making new revelations and prophecies, as well. Time and time again, their prophecies turn out to be embarrassingly false. Yet, the “prophets” never blush about their false prophecies. They excuse themselves by saying that their prophecies don’t *have to be* 100% accurate. They explain that as time goes on, and as their prophetic ministries “mature,” the light of revelatory truth “is getting brighter and brighter.” Amazingly, multitudes of people accept this explanation, and continue to heed what these false prophets tell them!

God’s true prophets stand in stark contrast to these deceivers. God’s requirement for His prophets was that if even *one* prophecy that they made in His name did not come to pass, they were no true prophets. Not only were they to be disregarded, but they were to be *put to death!*

Read Deuteronomy 18:20-22.

God’s true prophets were men of power and authority. Remember in **Luke 16**, when Jesus told the account of the rich man who went to hell? Remember how the rich man saw Abraham in Paradise, and pleaded with him to send Lazarus back from the dead to warn his five brothers not to come to that place? What was Abraham’s response? He said, ***“They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.”*** When the rich man protested that his brothers would surely listen if someone were to come back from the grave, Abraham said, ***“If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”*** Think of that! Jesus said that to reject the Scriptures that were written by the prophets is to reject God. That is power! That is authority!

Now, *how* did God give His revelations to the prophets? Let’s look at the Scripture again. **(Read Hebrews 11:1 again.)** Paul says that God spoke to the prophets at ***“sundry times and in divers manners.”*** Those words ***“sundry”*** and ***“divers”*** simply mean “including many different things, of different kinds.” What Paul is saying is that God gave revelations to many different prophets, at many different points in history, and in many different ways. He gave His revelation in widely different *measures*, as well. To some prophets, God gave only a small amount of revelation; but to others He gave a *great* amount of revelation. Take Moses, for example. God gave a *huge* amount of revelation to Moses. The *manner* in which God spoke to Moses was not to be surpassed, either. When God gave the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai, there was lightning and thunder; and God’s voice sounded like an ear-piercing trumpet throughout the camp of Israel. The whole mountain shook, and burned with supernatural fire. Moses himself walked into the flame, and came back out of the flame forty days later, without dying! God Himself came down to the mountain in human form, and spoke to Moses face-to-face; and He wrote the Ten Commandments on the tablets of stone with His own “finger.”

Moses was a man who was greatly beloved by God. He was given a tremendous amount of divine revelation (5 books of the Bible, and 79,976 written words, to be exact!) Yet, to other prophets, God gave only one or two small books. Sometimes God spoke to the prophets in dreams or visions. Sometimes He spoke audibly. Sometimes He sent an angel to give them a message. Sometimes He merely spoke in a still, small, inaudible voice, as He guided their inner thoughts. God didn’t give all of His revelation in one deposit, either. As the centuries

rolled by, God gave more and more revelation to His prophets. Yet, their prophecies never contradicted each other. Their prophecies fit together hand-in-glove, and built upon each other. How so? Because they were all given by the same Shepherd--the God of Israel.

The prophets were extremely important to the Hebrews. The words that they wrote down are the very words of God. To reject the prophets' words is to reject God! Yet, as important as the prophets are, there is another Prophet who outshines them all. There is a Prophet who came into our world 2,000 years ago; and compared to Him, all the prophets of the Old Testament pale in importance. The prophets are like the stars; and Moses, at best, is like the moon; but the Prophet who came down from Heaven 2,000 years ago is like the blazing noonday sun! His name is the Lord Jesus Christ.

We've examined the ministry of the prophets; but now, let us examine...

II. The ministry of God's Son (vv. 2-3)

(Read verses 1-2 again.) In **verse 1**, Paul acknowledged the authority of the Old Testament prophets. But then, in **verse 2**, He makes a startling statement. He says that God has now, "***in these last days,***" spoken to us "***by his Son.***" What is Paul saying? He's saying that when Jesus began His preaching ministry, a whole new era of history began. It is the period of history that God calls "***the last days.***" Now, *we* tend to think of "***the last days***" as the times shortly before Christ's *second* coming. Yet, according to Paul, "***the last days***" began when *Christ was here on earth*; and it continues to this day. John said the same thing, as well, in **1 John 2:18**. He said, "***Little children, it is the last time.***"

So, then, what makes "***last days***" the "***last days***"? It's simple. The "***last days***" are the *times of the Kingdom*. Now, obviously, the Kingdom isn't here yet. The 1,000-year Kingdom of Jesus Christ has not yet come. However, it *could* have come, and *should* have come, 2,000 years ago! When John the Baptist and Jesus told the people that "***the kingdom of heaven is at hand,***" they weren't speaking idle words. The Kingdom truly *could have* been restored to Israel ***if*** they, as a nation, had repented, and believed on Jesus as their Messiah. Of course, Jesus had to be rejected, and die on the cross, and rise again, in order to pay for our sins; yet, if the Jewish nation had only believed on Jesus shortly after His death and resurrection, they would have been spared the destruction of their Temple; and they would not have had to endure 2,000 years of wandering and persecution. The "***last days***" did, truly, begin when Christ was on earth, because that was when the *Kingdom of the Messiah* was being offered to them. For now, the Kingdom has been set aside; but in the meantime, the "***last days***" is still in progress.

Already, we can see a huge difference between Jesus and all the prophets who came before Him. Jesus isn't merely "another" prophet: He is *the* Prophet! His coming marks a whole new era of history. The "last days" began with *Him*; and the Kingdom of Israel is awaiting Israel's acceptance of *Him*. He is the great Prophet whom Moses foretold. He is the Messiah.

Read Deuteronomy 18:15-19.

When Moses said that there would arise a Prophet "***like unto me,***" He didn't mean that he and the Messiah would be on the same level of greatness. He simply means that there would be

similarities between their work. Moses was a lawgiver; but Christ is *the* Lawgiver. Moses delivered the Jews from Egypt; but Christ is our Deliverer from sin, death, and hell. Moses brought in a whole new dispensation of history, with great signs and wonders to confirm it; and likewise, Christ brought in a new dispensation (the New Covenant) with great signs and wonders to confirm it. Moses and Jesus *are* similar in many ways. Yet, the differences between them are immense. Moses was a sinful man; but Jesus is the sinless Son of God. Moses was merely an *instrument* through whom God did miracles; but Jesus had the power, in Himself, to do miracles, because He is God!

Now, let's get back to the prophecy in **Deuteronomy**. God told Israel that a great Prophet who would, one day, arise from among them. This Prophet would be one of them. Yet, He would be immensely greater than any of them, **because He would be their promised Messiah**. That is exactly what Paul is pointing out to his readers. Right at the beginning of this letter, Paul is making the case that Jesus is not just any prophet; he is ***the Prophet!*** He is *better than* all the prophets, because He is, by His very nature, superior to them. *How* is He superior to the prophets? Paul lists seven ways.

First, Jesus is superior to the prophets because **He is the appointed heir of all things**. (Read **Hebrews 1:2 again**.) No prophet of the Old Testament was ever called the "***heir of all things***"; but Jesus is called by this title! He is "***heir of all things***" by right of creation! He is the Creator of all things; and therefore, the earth is His, and the fulness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein. Everything belongs to Him! For now, God is allowing Satan to do his evil work in this world; and God is using him to accomplish His own plan. However, one day, when Christ returns to this earth to set up His kingdom, He will claim full possession of His Kingdom! The kingdoms of this world will be crushed to pieces. Christ will rule supreme; and *no* rebellion will be tolerated in His Kingdom!

If you have not been saved, I urge you to receive Jesus into your heart by faith, and to enter His kingdom today! The 1,000-year Kingdom has not come to earth yet; but in the meantime, there is a *spiritual* Kingdom called "the Kingdom of God," into which you *must* enter, by way of the New Birth. You cannot be "in between" God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom. Either you belong to Satan's kingdom because you are still in the natural, sinful condition in which you were born; or, you have been forgiven of your sins, and birthed into God's kingdom. If you will receive Christ by faith, you will not only be saved from hell, but you will rule and reign with Him in His Kingdom when He returns to earth. He is heir of all things; and He will share the administration of His Kingdom with all who love and trust in Him.

Read Psalm 2:1-12.

Read Revelation 2:25-27.

Now, why else is Jesus superior to the prophets? He is superior **because He is the one who created the worlds**. (Read **Hebrews 1:2 again**.) Time and time again, the Scriptures state that Jesus is the Creator of all things. Now, *in His humanity*, Jesus is *part* of creation. When Jesus took on human flesh, He became the "***firstborn of all creation***." (In other words, out of all created beings, He is the Preeminent One.) Yet, Jesus is not only Man: He is God. As God, He is *not* part of creation; instead, He is the *Creator* of all things.

Read John 1:1-3.

Read Colossians 1:12-16.

No prophet other than Jesus ever had the power to *create* anything! The prophets didn't perform miracles by their own power; it was *God* who performed the miracles through them. *Jesus*, on the other hand, is the Creator of all things! Somewhere out there, there is an end to the universe; but Christ is infinite, because He is the Creator of all things.

By the way, not only did Jesus create the *physical* world on which we live, but He also created *time*! You'll notice, there in **Hebrews 1:2**, that Paul said that Jesus "***made the worlds.***" The Greek word for "world" is *aeon*; and *aeon* means "world" in the sense of "age." It implies not only the *physical* world, but also everything that will *transpire* in this world throughout time! Simply put, Christ is the Creator of time and eternity!

Read Isaiah 9:6.

Isaiah 9:6 is one of the most beautiful prophecies of Christ in the entire Old Testament. Jesus is called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, and the Prince of peace. However, He is also called "***The everlasting Father.***" This name, *abi-ad*, literally means "Father of eternity." What this means is that Jesus is the *Possessor* of eternity--the *Owner* of time and eternity. **Christ Himself is eternal**, having no beginning of end; and as the eternal God, **He is in sovereign control over everything** that happens in the course of this world. By the way, how is *that* for comfort and reassurance, brethren? No matter what may happen in this world, and no matter how "out of control" things seem to be, they are *not* out of control. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator of all things, is guiding history to its conclusion; and in the end, Satan and his crew will lose, and *He will win!* This means that we are on the winning side!

Now, how else is Jesus superior to the prophets? He is superior to the prophets **because He is the brightness of His Father's glory.** (Read **Hebrews 1:3** again.) This description "***brightness of his glory***" means exactly what it sounds as though it means. Jesus *is* Light! In **Revelation 21**, we are told that there will be no need of the sun in the New Jerusalem, because the "***glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.***" By the way, this is why no mortal man has ever truly seen God. If we, in our mortal flesh, were to see God in all His glory, we would die immediately! Yet, *that is Who Jesus is!* He is the brightness of God's glory. The Father is unfettered Light; and the Son is unfettered Light!

This brings me to the next way that Christ is superior to the prophets. Jesus is superior because **He is the express image of His Father's person.** (Read **verse 3** again.) The Greek word for "image" is *charakter*. This word refers to the mark that is made by an engraving tool. In Bible times, seals were made by impressing a carved stamp into hot wax; and the image made in the wax was called the *charakter*. It was an exact representation of the original. Likewise, Christ is the exact essence and being as His Father. They are distinct Persons; yet, in a way that our finite minds cannot fully comprehend, they are one. Jesus is like His Father in every way; thus, by coming into the world, Jesus *revealed* the Father to us!

The Bible makes it clear that no one has seen God in His actual glory. John the Baptist said, "***No man hath seen God at any time.***" Yet, by taking on human flesh, Jesus Christ was able

to reveal the very essence of the Father. He spoke His Father's words. He revealed His Father's power through the miracles that He did. He revealed the Father's perfect justice, righteousness, love, and mercy. That is why John said of Jesus, "***The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.***" In other words, Jesus has "revealed" the Father, or made Him known, simply by coming into our world. As Jesus explained it, "***He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.***"

This is powerful stuff, isn't it? Yet, Paul is not finished! There are three more ways that Jesus is superior to the prophets. The next way that Jesus is superior is that **He upholds the universe by the word of His power. (Read verse 3 again.)** Not only is Jesus the Creator of all things: He is the Sustainer of all things. Every moment, the universe is held together by Jesus Christ. Without Him, the heavens and the earth simply would not continue. **Colossians 1:17** says of Jesus, "***And he is before all things, and by him all things consist*** [hold together]." Yet, that is not all. The word for "***upheld***" here in **Hebrews 1:3** means to "uphold" in the sense of *carrying* something. In other words, Jesus is not only holding the universe together: He is *moving history* toward its final consummation. No mere man ever had, or ever will have, such power. Prophets cannot, by their own power or authority, "decree" things to happen; but Jesus can! All power is given to Him in heaven and in earth.

How else is Jesus superior to the prophets? Jesus is superior to the prophets **because He, by Himself, purged our sins. (Read verse 3 again.)** No prophet ever had the power to purge anyone's sins. **No prophet, that is, except Jesus!** Jesus is the only sinless One who ever walked this earth. As God, He is the only One who had the prerogative to take our place, and to become the Substitute for our sin. When Jesus died on the cross, no one else helped Him. Mary didn't help Him. No prophet, apostle, priest, or saint, living or dead, assisted Him. Just as the high priests went *alone* into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement on behalf of the nation, and symbolically sprinkled the blood of goats on the mercy seat to cover their sins, so Christ, our *true* High Priest, has *by Himself* purged our sins with His own blood.

Now, there is one last way that Jesus is superior to the prophets. Jesus is superior to the prophets **because He is now seated on the right hand of God. (Read verse 3 again.)** There are a couple important points that I would like to make from this verse. First, Jesus is not sitting on a separate throne off to the righthand side of His Father's throne. There aren't two thrones; there is only one! (And Jesus is sitting upon it!) This expression "***right hand of the Majesty on high***" simply means that Christ has the same authority that His Father has.

With this in mind, I would like to point out one more important truth from this verse. You'll notice that Jesus is not *standing*, but *sitting*. Throughout the New Testament, we are told that Jesus *sat down* on His Father's throne. Why is this so important? Because in the Old Testament, the priests never sat down while they were serving in the Temple! They were always standing. There were no chairs in the Temple, because their work was never done.

In contrast, *Jesus' High-Priestly work is done*. He is our *true* Sacrifice for sins, and our *true* High Priest; and His sacrificial work was finished on the cross 2,000 years ago. Everything that is needed for your salvation is complete. That is why He is now *seated* on His throne!

Conclusion: Jesus Christ is infinitely more than a prophet. Yes, He made many prophecies; and every one of His prophecies will be fulfilled. However, Jesus is not merely a *messenger*, as the prophets of the Old Testament were; He is the God who *gave* all those messages to the prophets! Jesus isn't merely a

good teacher, or a great prophet, whose example you can follow; He is our all in all! He is our God and Saviour; and *He cannot be ignored!* He is to be exalted above all else in our lives! Christian, Jesus Christ has saved you; but **are you living for Him as you should?** Does He have your heart's utmost affection and devotion? I would also ask, "**Do you belong to Jesus? Have you been saved?**" Perhaps you have never truly become a Christian, because you are not trusting in the finished work of the Prophet, Priest, and King, Jesus Christ. If so, stop trusting in *your* goodness, and place your trust in Christ alone!