

What do the prophets say about Christ?

Today we will begin to look at what a NT prophet, the writer of Hebrews says.

Hebrews 1:1-4

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. ESV.

According to the writer of Hebrews, who is a NT prophet of Christ, God has always spoken to the fathers by the prophets.

Hebrews 1:1-2 brings out the following facts

1. Redemptive history is divided into two distinct periods.

In the first, God spoke at many times and in many ways to 'our fathers' but now He speaks, and continues to speak, to us through his Son and His son continues to speak to us through His NT prophets.

2. The second period, when the Son speaks, is the climax of redemptive history.

Now, in these last days" – corresponds to the "latter day references" throughout the Old Testament that point to the New Covenant era.

Examples:

De 4:30 "When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice.

De 31:29 "For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands."

Jer 30:24 The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back Until He has performed and until He has accomplished The intent of His heart; In the latter days you will understand this.

Jer 48:47 "Yet I will restore the fortunes of Moab In the latter days," declares the LORD. Thus far the judgment on Moab.

Da 10:14 "Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your

people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet future.”

These OT Scriptures point to the time of Christ and the New covenant era that began at Pentecost.

3. The Son, and that age in which he speaks, is superior and has priority.
 - a. Not only is the Son the prophet of the latter days He as prophet is superior and has priority over all the other prophets.

Christ is the superior Prophet who declares God's Word. The contrast between Christ "The Prophet" the other prophets of the Old Covenant are easy to see.

Christ brought a final and complete message as the Son of God.

Prophets were called by God and appointed by God. There were many prophets and each gave a fragmentary and incomplete message. Jesus Christ was God's "last word" as far as revelation is concerned. Christ is the source, center, and the end of everything that God has to say. Christ's New Testament prophets, the apostles, bring forth His Word.

The New Testament views the activity of the Spirit as the activity of Jesus Himself.

9You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. Romans 8:9; for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, Phil 1:19

Jesus speaks of his Apostles as his spokesmen.

40"Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me". Matt 10:40

We see the agency of Christ (sent by the Father) and the agency of the Apostles (sent by Christ):

21Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." John 20:21

Christ, by the Spirit, directed his New Testament apostles:

26But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. John 14:26

12"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. John 16:12-15

The purpose of this teaching is for the apostles public ministry (see John 15:26-27, 16:7-11

26"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. 27And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. John 15:26-27

The New Testament as the Voice of Christ

'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. 16'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. Acts 26:16

8For even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than pulling you down, I will not be ashamed of it. 2 Cor 10:8

1This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles,

2I already gave you a warning when I was with you the second time. I now repeat it while absent: On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others, 3since you are demanding proof that Christ is speaking through me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. 2 Cor 13:2

We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error. 1 John 4:6

See also references to 'apostleship' in verse one of: Romans 1, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. See Romans 1:5, 2 Pet 3:2, 1 Thes 2:6.

Jesus Speaking to Us through His sent ones

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matt 28:19-20

Although both Christ and the prophets were involved in the process of revelation,

John 1:1-5 makes it clear that Christ is the Word of God.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

And He is the Word of Life

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— 2 the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us (1 John 1:1-2),

However, Christ as logos is not all of what it means for Him to be the word. Christ is the Incarnation of the Word. He is the message of the Word - He is the utterance of God. If we interpret the Psalms properly we can easily see that Ps. 119 is essentially speaking about Christ in Old Covenant terms. Once we realize that Christ is the New Covenant in His person and we interpret the Psalm in light of Him it breathes new life into Psalm 119 and that is not over spiritualizing or allegorizing. It is exactly what John and the author of Hebrews are saying in light of type/antitype, shadow/substance and picture/fulfillment.

4. The Son is the "Heir of all things" ..

The Bible clearly teaches that Christ has eternally been the Son. He was always God and He was always the Second Person of the Trinity and He was always the Son of God. The eternal Son became Man at the time of the incarnation. Sonship involves the very Person and Nature of Jesus Christ, the essence of who He is as the Second Person of the Trinity, and thus there could never be a time when He was not the Son

because there could never be a time when He was other than who He is. The term Son of God indicates three things:

1. He is a Person distinct from God His Father; 2. He is the heir, not the servant of His Father (Son of God does not mean "subservient to God"); 3. He shares the divine nature of God His Father.

Heirship in relationship to Christ concerns the fact that Jesus is better than the prophets because He has been appointed heir of all things. The Old Testament prophets foretold of a coming kingdom. They envisioned a time when God would take His throne on the earth and rule over the kingdoms of the earth.

“the One through whom God made the universe”.

The idea in the phrase is equivalent to the word through. God, either the triune God or the Father, appointed the Son creator as well as heir. Paul writes the same in Col.1:16.

The closeness of the relationship of Christ as creator and as heir seems to imply that He creates to inherit or He inherits in order to create. The point is that there was purpose in the creation, there was an end in view and that was redemption and the glorification of His bride according to Col. 1:16-20. Other affirmations of Christ's role as agent of creation in the New Testament include: John 1:3, 10; 1 Cor 8:6; and Rom 11:36.

The son is the agent of creation of all things, which implies his pre-existence, and receives all things as his inheritance. The author states that the son was the agent through which all the worlds were created.

and He upholds the Universe by the Word of His Power”.....

This describes Christ who upholds all creatures and the universe he has made. He preserves , supports, and supplies all of creation it with the necessities of life. He

rules and governs all by His providence.

5. "He is radiance of God's glory"

The word radiance can mean reflected brightness, refulgence or effulgence (ray from an original light body) as the Greek fathers hold. Both senses are true of Christ in his relation to God as Jesus shows in plain language in John 12:45; 14:9. The meaning "effulgence" suits the context better, though it gives the idea of eternal generation of the Son (John 1:1), the term the Father applied to God necessarily involving Son. This same metaphor is used in 2 Corinthians 4:6.

In his essential nature: he is "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being." He is, in other words, as in John 1:14, 18, God made visible.

6. "and the exact imprint of His nature"

To see what God is like we must look at the Son. His "radiance" is literally the "outshining" of the glory that is God's essential character, while "exact representation" translates the Greek metaphor charakterm, meaning "imprint or stamp" and is used, for instance, of the impression made on a coin, which exactly reproduces the design on the die. (The idea is the same as the more familiar phrase "the image of God.>"). I believe there is a close echo of Colossians 1:15, 19: "He is the image of the invisible God. God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him."

7. As He is truly God, only He can purify "kathaismos" - cleanse us of our sins. Christ was made the expiation of sin by the sacrifice of himself and he made atonement for the sins of his people and he took His peoples sins upon himself and bore them, and removed them far away, and eliminated them.

8. He sat down (ekathisen) at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Majesty is God the Father, and his "right hand" designs his power, greatness, and glory, and is expressive of the high honor Christ, as man, is given. His sitting at this seat shows the glorious exaltation of him in human nature, after his sufferings, and death, and

resurrection from the dead.

9. Superior to angels.....

The first question one must ask is why the author has begun by drawing a clear contrast between Christ and the angels? The initial reaction of the reader is to assume that the 1st century readers were worshipping the angels or exalting them to a lofty position, as the epistle to the Colossians addresses. This conclusion is not correct. Gnosticism might exalt the angels to deity, but Judaism would not. The Jews held a proper view of the angels in light of their servile role to God. The first readers of this letter were not exalting the angels, instead they were guilty of devaluing Christ. The intent of our author and of the Holy Spirit is not to put an end to angel worship; it is to illustrate the preeminence of Messiah worship.

Now to simply stop with this conclusion and demonstrate Christ's superiority to the angels that he alone might be exalted to a superior position, would still be an injustice to the context and the passage's intended application. For further insight is given in Hebrews 2: 1 -4 of the author's reason for addressing Christ in relationship to the angels, a clear contrast is being drawn between ministers of the law of old and Christ the new lawgiver. The angels are brought up in light of their role in the giving of the law under the first covenant, as indicated later in Hebrews 2:2-3a, where we read,

For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?

The angels served as spokesmen of that first law. Christ is brought up in light of His prophetic role in the giving of this, His law, in contrast to that first law.

Christ is more than just a minister of the law - He is the lawgiver. This is demonstrated in Hebrews 1: 4 - 14 by (a) the title 'Son of God,' (b) the clear use of Messianic Psalms and passages, and (c) the attention given to Christ as Lord and

sovereign:

a. First, as Son of God, Jesus speaks and legislates not as a mere servant or administrator of another, He is the express image and likeness of God. He bears the characteristics and attributes of God because He is God. Thus, He has all due authority and power to speak and enforce what He has spoken. His 'Sonship' is a clear theme of this epistle, as it speaks of His unique and authoritatively glorified position.

b. Second, the Messianic passages quoted from the Old Testament indicate that He was both subject and intended design of the Scriptures, of the eternal plan of God, and of that Covenant. He is the completion of all that has gone before.

c. Last, His exaltation and reign, His rule and His might, demonstrate that He does not speak in vain, in weakness, nor as a mere created vessel, but as the Sovereign Creator Himself.

Thus as Christ, Lord, and Sovereign (He being superior to those by whom the law of old was mediated) surely His words should not be ignored. The law of old, as Galatians 3: 19 says, was "ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator." That law "was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward" (Heb. 2: 2); how much less shall Christ's word fail if he is so much better than the angels?

Each of these functions is a way of describing Christ and we could give these functions descriptive names for Christ. Just as He is the justifier because he justifies and he is the redeemer because He redeems us and so on.

As the final spokesman He is the Prophet, as the radiance he is the Glory of God, as the exact imprint - the character, He is God. He is the Heir and as He upholds He is the Sovereign. He is the Son equal with, God and as he purifies, He is the Expiator of our sins. Seated at the right hand of Majesty He is the Exalted God-man and he exceeds anything angels can do because He is Lord over all.