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# Words of Truth

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## Hebrews 1:1

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The book of Hebrews opens with: *“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets...”* (Hebrews 1:1). The context is going to bear out that the reference to God in this passage is God the Father. This is important because when talking about God, we could be discussing Jesus (Romans 9:1-5) and the Holy Spirit as well (Acts 5:1-4). When we read the wording of “sundry times” it is hard to do a word study on this. It only appears this one time in the New Testament. The term is defined as this: “In many portions, i.e. variously as to time and agency (piecemeal): — at sundry times. By many portions, by many times and in many ways” (Strong’s # 4181). Similarly, a word study on “divers manners” is difficult because it too only appears here in this one passage. The definition for “divers manners” is: “in many ways, i.e. variously as to method or form: — in divers manners. In many manners” (Strong’s # 4187).

When we examine the wording “time past” we can do a little more research on that wording. The Greek term “πάλαι” appears six times in the original text. It is defined as: “any while, a great while ago, (of) old, in time past. Of old, former; long ago” (Strong’s # 3819). It is translated in Matthew 11:21 as “long ago”. In Luke 10:13 it is translated “a great while ago”. The “fathers” is a genealogical reference to those of times past (i.e. Luke 1:55, John 6:49, Acts 3:13, etc.). The “prophets” are those, in connection to the rest of the statements, who prophesied a great while ago (James 5:10 and I Peter 1:10). That is an important distinction, because during the first century there were also prophets prophesying (Acts 15:32, Acts 19:1-7, I Corinthians 12:28, and I Corinthians 14:29-32). The Hebrew writer is not referring to those first century prophets, but rather the prophets of long ago.

So, this letter opens with reminding the reader that God the Father spoke many times in many ways long ago to their fathers by the prophets. Think about the importance of that opening declaration. As we go through this book it is going to be obvious that it was Jewish Christians that were the audience of these writings (i.e. Hebrews 3:9). There are going to be many references, throughout this letter, to things stated during the times of the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms.

So, what does it mean that God spoke by the prophets? Consider this: *“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy*

*Ghost” (II Peter 1:20-21). The prophets were not speaking their own words. The prophets were not telling their audiences what they thought the Lord meant. Think about this: “Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue” (II Samuel 23:1-2).*

We, who are God’s people, should understand that all Scriptures are inspired of God [God-breathed] (II Timothy 3:15-17). Whether it was times past or in the first century, we see that those teaching were inspired of God (Exodus 4:10-17, Job 32:8, Isaiah 39:5-8, Jeremiah 1:9, Matthew 10:16-20, John 16:13, I Corinthians 2:9-13, I Corinthians 14:37, and Galatians 1:10-12).

When we consider God speaking by the prophets of old in many times, by many ways, and in various portions; there are some more things to consider. God did not reveal everything before Moses, during the days of Moses, or immediately after the days of Moses. Revelation in times past came over many generations. From the days of Noah, to Abraham, to Moses, to the prophets following; God declared His instructions over time (Luke 24:27, Luke 24:44, Acts 7:2-53, and Acts 13:13-40).

For these Jewish Christians that are being instructed in the letter to the Hebrews, they needed to realize that the authority for the things about to be taught was given long ago. Moses instructed about Jesus long ago (Deuteronomy 18:15-19 and Acts 3:22-26). The prophets taught about Jesus long ago (Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:6-7, Isaiah 53:1-12, and Jeremiah 23:5-6).

First century Jewish Christians struggled letting go of the Law and the prophets as their standard (Acts 10:1-11:18, Acts 21:17-22, Galatians 5:1-12, and Galatians 6:12-15). When Jesus was teaching, prior to His law coming into full effect, He had to deal with this problem (Matthew 12:1-8, Matthew 19:1-12, John 8:1-11, etc.). One way in which He did so was to refer those struggling with what He said to turn to the things written of old for verification (John 5:1-47).

Things written aforetime continue to this very day to be profitable unto men to study (Romans 15:4 and I Corinthians 10:1-12). First century saints verified the things they were being taught by searching Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11). It is therefore fitting that this letter opens in that direction. The first verse of the book of Hebrews is not the end of the statement though. This one sentence starts at verse one, but proceeds through verse four. The thought goes on from there. We will be looking at verse two next in our study. We will be looking at the last days, Jesus Christ our Lord, and the things said from those points forward. As we study this letter, build upon the knowledge we gain in our looking at every verse from here forward.