spoken in many parts and in many ways formerly to the Fathers in the prophets...

"Formally", that means before the coming of Christ, God had spoken to the Israelites in the prophets.

Sometimes He had even spaken directly to a person or persons as we shall see. Sometimes He spoke accompanied by lightenings and thunders as on mount Sinai. Once He spoke from a burning bush, though the bush was not consumed. Sometimes He spoke in visions and dreams.

To the people in general He spoke in the prophets whom He raised up especially to speak on His behalf.

for example: to Jeremiah, a very young man, who was hesitant to take up such a task, the hord encouraged him with the words —