

Christ is Superior to the Prophets

Hebrews 1:3

Part Four

Who is Jesus? This is a question that will be answered differently by different people depending upon their basic belief structure.

If a person's belief structure is rooted in Judaism they will most likely say something like this, "Jesus was a false messiah who claimed to be someone whom he was not."

If a person's belief structure is rooted in Islam they will most likely say something like this, "Jesus was a prophet but not more than a prophet."

If a person's belief structure is rooted in Buddhism he would most likely say something like this, "Jesus was a teacher, who possessed "Buddahood" or in other words "enlightenment," but he would not be particularly different than any other person who possessed that same "enlightenment."

If a person's belief structure is rooted in Hinduism, he would most likely say something like this, "Jesus was an avatar or an incarnation of Vishnu but not particularly different than any of the other avatars who had come and gone from the earth."

If a person's belief structure is rooted in the Jehovah Witness faith, he would most likely say something like this, "Jesus was God's only direct creation, who then after having been created by God went on to create everything else."

If a person's belief structure is rooted in Mormonism, he would most likely say something like this, "Jesus is a god, the first born spirit child of Elohim and his goddess wife, who later produced other spirit children, which not only included Satan but also us."

So who is Jesus? Everybody seems to have an opinion but let me share with you Peter's opinion, as well as Christ's response to his opinion as recorded for us in **Matthew 16:13-17**.

So now let me read these verses for you. **“Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ (14) And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah, but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.’ (15) He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ (16) Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”**

So how did Jesus respond to this opinion? (17) **“And Jesus said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.’”** So did Jesus like this opinion that Peter, speaking on behalf of the disciples, put forward? Absolutely! Why? He liked it, because what Peter said was the truth.

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God! But even though this is a true statement, I do not believe that this true but very succinct statement, about who Christ is, is nearly as complete or expansive as the statement that was made by the author of Hebrews in **Hebrews 1:1-4**.

And this thought brings us back to our study of Hebrews, which was written by an unknown author to a group of Hebrew Christians living in Rome around 67-69 AD in order to strengthen their faith in the midst of a great persecution, so that they in the midst of that persecution would not be tempted to turn from Christ back to Judaism.

So how did the author of this letter seek to strengthen the faith of these struggling Hebrew Christians by his letter? He sought to strengthen their faith by showing them throughout his letter that Christ was superior to anything that they might have left behind in Judaism, which led us to the question that we are now seeking to answer as we continue our study of this book. And what is that question?

How did the author of the book of Hebrews see Christ as superior? He saw Christ as superior in numerous ways.

First of all, the author of the book of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to the Old Testament prophets (Hebrews 1:1-4). So in what way did the author of Hebrews see Christ as superior to these prophets?

The author of the book of Hebrews saw Christ as superior to the Old Testament prophets because he believed that Christ, being God's Son, was the culmination of divine revelation (Hebrews 1:1-2a).

In other words, the author of the book of Hebrews saw the Old Testament prophets simply as an opening act of divine revelation sent to prepare the way for the true headliner, who was Christ, the only begotten Son of God. We saw this in **Hebrews 1:1**.

But the author of Hebrews was not satisfied with simply having made this point. He wanted to drive this point home to his readers even further. So how did the author seek to accomplish this?

The author of Hebrews continued to drive home the magnitude of Christ's superiority to the Old Testament prophets by providing a sevenfold description of Christ (Hebrews 1:2b-4). And where did the author record this sevenfold description? He recorded it for us in **Hebrews 1:2-4**.

And how did the author begin this sevenfold description? The author of Hebrews described Christ as God's appointed heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2b). So now let us now go back to the midpoint of **verse 2** of **Hebrews 1** and see if this is not so. **"In these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He [referring to God] appointed heir of all things."**

What a marvelous descriptive phrase! When sin entered into the world, and death through sin, Satan became the ruler of this world. But he will not continue to be. For one day, as God's appointed heir, His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, will take charge and He will rule this world as it has been prophesied in **Psalm 2**.

So after the author described Christ as the **"the appointed heir of all things,"** what did He say next about Christ in this sevenfold description?

The author of Hebrews described God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the one through whom God made the world (Hebrews 1:2c). Let us now go back to **Hebrews 1:2** and see if this is not so but this time I will read a little bit further. **"In these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world."** Again, what a marvelous descriptive phrase! Christ, God's Son, is described

by the author of Hebrews as the One through whom His Father created all things.

So not only was Christ, according to the author of Hebrews, the appointed heir of all things, He was also the One through Whom God the Father created all things. But the author is still not done in seeking to drive home to his readers Christ's superiority to the Old Testament prophets.

So this now brings us to this morning's message as we continue on to consider the next part of the author's sevenfold description. So, what is this next part of the description?

Not only did the author describe Christ as God's appointed heir of all things, and as the One through whom His father made the world, but the author of Hebrews described God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the radiance His Father's glory and the exact representation of His nature (Hebrews 1:3). So now let me read for you **Hebrews 1:3** and see if this is not so. **"And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature."** So did the author describe Christ in the way that I told you that he had described Him? Yes, he did.

So, what is my hope for this message as we examine what the author meant by the words we just read? That it would lead us to a better understanding, not only of the person of Christ and His relationship to His Father, but also to a better understanding of what it means when the Scriptures call us to glorify God and how in fact that can be done.

So let us begin by looking at the very first part of this phrase, **"And He is the radiance of His glory."** So, what does this mean?

In order to understand what the author meant we need to first of all understand the meaning of the word "radiance."

The word "radiance" (AP AUGASMA) used only here in the New Testament carries the idea of "splendor" or "intense brightness."

But what was the source of Christ's radiance or intense brightness? The verse tells us. It was the "glory of God." What does the verse say? **"And He**

[Christ] **is the radiance** [or in other words the splendor or intense brightness] **of His glory,**” or in other words the glory of God.

So if this is true, that Christ is the radiance or in other words the “splendor” or “intense brightness” of the glory of God, would it be possible to distinguish Christ’s brightness from God’s glory? The answer is no. It would not be possible to distinguish Christ’s brightness from God’s glory. It would be impossible. And this is the authors point. One cannot separate the experience of looking at the brightness of a light from seeing the light itself because they are too closely associated. So even though we might not be able to see God because He is Spirit, we can still see His glory through Christ. Why? It is because Christ is the radiance of His glory.

So how should we think of God’s glory here in this verse? Obviously it is not the Shekinah glory, or in other words the created brightness that surrounds God’s revelation of himself.

The “glory” that the author is speaking of here in Hebrews 1:3 is the glory or honor that is associated with God Himself, or in other words the sum total of all His perfections and attributes.

Though God the Father is a Spirit and cannot be seen, His glory can be seen in His Son because His Son is the radiance of His glory. Therefore though we may not be able to see God with our physical eyes we will be able to see His glory, or in other words all of His perfections and attributes through Christ.

This is why when Philip asked Christ to show him the Father, Christ said to Philip in **John 14:9** “**Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father.**”

Can God’s glory be seen in other works other than through Christ? Yes! Absolutely! What does **Psalm 19:1** say? “**The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.**” So can God’s glory show other than through Christ? Yes, absolutely. But the glory of God will never be able to be seen so clearly than in Christ. Why? It is because “**Christ is the radiance of His glory.**”

And the author of Hebrews will drive home this point once again in the very next phrase but this time using different words.

So let us go back to **Hebrews 1:3** and continue to read. **“He is the radiance of his glory and the exact representation of His nature.”**

So, what did the author mean by exact representation? The word rendered “representation” (CHARAKTER) denoted an instrument used for engraving, and later the impression made by such an instrument. For example, it could refer to the impression made on coins, which would make it possible for those looking at the coin to recognize the features of someone or something that was represented by the image that was struck on the coin.

And in this case what would Christ, who is being described as an exact representation, make it possible for them looking at Christ to see? The verse tells us. It would make it possible for them to see the “nature” of God. The word translated “nature” (HYPOSTASEOS) comes from a word meaning “substance.”

So who is Christ according to the author of Hebrews? Christ is the radiance (the intense brightness) of God Himself, or in other words the sum total of all His perfections and attributes and as the exact representation of His nature, or in other words God’s something.

So is there any other way for us to see God’s glory other than through Christ? Yes! Certainly we can see a certain aspect of God’s glory through creation and certainly we can also see certain aspects of God’s glory even through the Old Testament prophets.

But the Bottom line is this. The only way for us to see God’s glory and to see it clearly in all of its fullness is to look at Christ.

May we by the grace of God through Christ put God on display by the way we live so that God might receive the glory, honor and praise that is due His name.