

The Vision of God

Hebrews 1:2-3

Last week we started our dive into the book of Hebrews, which starts off with a bang by declaring some of the glories of God! It is an epic beginning to the letter, and a beginning which the rest of the letter in many ways keep coming back to and finding its orientation with. Think of it like a thesis statement, which the rest of the letter keeps referring back to

The writer begins by reminding his audience that God has spoken. There is an implication in this declaration, though, which is that God speaking has all the weight and authority of God Himself. If God's authority and power was witnessed by His speaking in olden times, and because God does not change, and because God has spoken of the promise of sending His redeemer, then the Redeemer who has come, came with all the power and authority of God Himself. Thus, the Son of God, who is both messenger and message of God, is the final power and authority of the Almighty God! Whatever was said in the past was to prepare us for the Son. This is the argument that the Writer is reminding the people about, since they seemed to be moving away from the awe and reverence which Christ is due.

Jesus speaks with the voice of God, and is the Word of God made flesh. He is the fulfillment of all that God had spoken of and promised in the Old, while also ushering in the New, which is found in Him too. He speaks God's Word to us, and He manifests God to us so that we might live as godly ones in the world. This is the encouragement that the Writer is seeking to bring to his audience; to live as living representatives of the incarnated and resurrected Word of God in the world.

We are to imitate Christ in this regard because He is the very image of God Himself, sent into the world by the Father, and incarnated for our salvation. He calls His people into this kind of God-life, living out the character of our heavenly Father so that the elect might come to salvation.

The writer moves on from the Son of God being the voice of God, to the Son of God being the vision of God manifest. This is incredibly important to hold to: that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He came in the form of man, yet still being very God of very God. We must affirm both the divinity of Christ as well as His humanity. At the time that the Writer and the Apostles were writing, it wasn't unusual to face a community which put doubt on one aspect of this over the other. This is why the Apostle John, at the beginning of his first letter stated at the very beginning:

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— 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**

Notice the similarity of how John begins his letter and how the Writer begins our letter: with an emphasis of beginnings, and how Jesus is both fully God and fully Man.

The Writer in our letter will, in a short and wonderfully packed two verses, declare the same truth to us: that Jesus is both fully God and fully Man. Let us now turn our attention to what the Writer says about our Lord Jesus

Hebrews 1:2-3

...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. 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...

THIS IS THE WORD OF THE LORD:

THANKS BE TO GOD!

The Vision of God

What is the vision of the good life that you are pursuing and working towards? What is the purpose for your life and the life of your family?

I ask this because we are now getting a vivid description of the vision of God in the person of His Son. If we believe that life is best lived under God's rule, then let us look at the one who envisions this life to us so that we may align our lives according to Him!

There are 7 characteristics of the Son that are described for us in these two verses, and these will serve as the focus for the sermon this morning. However, as we delve into the mysteries of the Son of God, we are treading on ground which has proved treacherous to others in the past, finding themselves wandering from the truth as they have sought to fully understand what the Scriptures describe for us about Jesus. Thus, at some point, we must simply trust what God has spoken to us and revealed to us, even if we cannot fully grasp what it is we are seeking to comprehend. I would encourage us by St. Augustine from his epic tome "On the Trinity" when he began to approach the subject of the nature of the Son of God:

"When men seek to know God, and bend their minds according to the capacity of human weakness to the understanding of the Trinity, learning as they must by experience, the wearisome difficulties of the task, whether from the sight of the mind striving to gaze upon light unapproachable, or indeed, from the manifold and various modes of speech employed in the sacred writings;...I will not be slow to search out the substance of God, whether through His Scripture or through the creature. For both of these are set forth for our contemplation to this end: that He Himself may be sought, and Himself be loved." – **St. Augustine On the Trinity**

"What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
– **Westminster Catechism, Q1**

The goal for us as we take a look at these 7 characteristics is simply to revel in Christ, to comprehend Him and His love for us, and allow our own love and devotion for Him to grow!

Inheritor

The Writer now focuses his attention on this Son, who is the final Word and fulfillment of the promises previously given. He richly describes this Son, bringing great exaltation to Him and encouraging the believers to hold fast to this Supreme faith that they have been given.

The first is that Jesus is the Inheritor. This is a natural progression when speaking of sonship; when you speak of sonship, you naturally also speak of inheritance, for the child inherits that which the parents produce. Both in terms of personalities, as well as legacies...

“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things were created through him and for him.”
– **Colossians 1:16**

Paul here is teaching us that the *telos*, or purpose and end design, of the universe is for Jesus Christ. This is a Theocentric view of the universe and of human history, rather than an anthropocentric view. This is in stark contrast to how we all literally view all of history to be about us humans. But the Writer of Hebrews is stating the the purpose and end design of the cosmos is for the glory and possession of Christ Jesus! How would this change the way that you view your life, your vision for your life, and the goings on in the world if we kept this in the forefront of our minds!?

This description also begins to give us a glimpse into the Divine nature of Jesus the Man, that He was with God in the beginning, He was not created. This stands in contrast to any other religion which seeks to have man become God, here we see God become Man so that man might come to God. The ancient heretics, the Arians, had a slogan that they would chant at the Council of Nicaea, which went “There was a time when He was not”, which is in direct contradiction to the amazing statement of the Writer here in Hebrews. We must hold to the teaching of the eternal nature of Christ Jesus, otherwise we have a being who cannot save humankind.

Creator

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” – **John 1:1-3**

“ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth...” – **John 1:14**

Jesus is the creator of all things. The word “world” in this verse is the word for “ages”, meaning that all of Cosmic history is not just the inheritance of Christ, but that He is also the designer and creator of all

ages of cosmic, including human, history. Being the Creator also means that He is in sovereign and sole authority over His own creation.

We are not in authority over ourselves, but we are to live under the benevolent rule and authority of Christ, our Creator. How might this change the way that we live in this world of uncertainty, of change, of division, of unknowns, and troubles? It ought to give us great peace to know the One who created all things, who continues to sovereignly direct all the movings of cosmic history to His end!

Radiator

Source and radiator of divine splendor. He is not a mere reflection of the divine glory, but actually a part of it! Not like the reflection of the sun in the moon, but the actual rays of sunlight warming and cheering us, bringing the life which we need.

“And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.” And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.” – **Matthew 17:2-8**

Beautiful description of the divine splendor in the face of Jesus. Also, we can note the fading glory of Moses and Elijah here. A picture of how the ministry of Jesus is supreme over the prophets in the OT. Here Jesus stands as the sole mediator and figure to whom we turn to for safety and salvation. Jesus’ beauty outshines the glory of the old!

“For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.. – **2 Corinthians 4:6**

Who is capturing your awe and wonder? Who is the definition of glory and beauty? I pray that we turn the eyes of our heart to see the and continue looking into the glorious face of Jesus Christ as the definition of beauty and glory!

Representer

Exact representation of the Father’s being, or character.

He is everything the Father is, yet distinct and separate. Hence the Greek words the Writer uses: character and hypostasis. The word “character” is used in the Greek to indicate a mold or dice by which coins would be imprinted with their design. Like how we print money, there is always the primary design by which all other true bills are made. All true printed money has its source from and alignment to the initial character.

“For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.” – **John 1:18**

Hypostatic union: Jesus is two natures in One person. Affirming this is necessary for salvation and the gospel! To deny one of the natures of Christ is to believe in a lie and is not the gospel...all gospels, or news of salvation, must face this litmus test to be approved as the legitimate gospel.

The primary truth we must affirm with this truth that we have in the Scriptures is this: Jesus is co-eternal and con-substantial with the Father.

We affirm this because:

- We believe that there is in fact One true God.
- We believe that He has spoken and revealed Himself to us through the prophets, recorded in the Scriptures, preserved by the Spirit.
- We believe that the Scriptures all speak with one voice about the person and work of the Son of God on His people’s behalf.
- We believe that Jesus actually lived, and actually died, and actually rose again from the dead, and that He is the fulfillment of all that God has spoken to us beforehand. What the Scriptures teach us about the nature of Jesus we must believe and hold firm to in our faith.

Problems arise when we try to fully plumb the depths of this wonderful relationship to the Father. At the end of the day I want us to be where the great English preacher Charles Spurgeon lands:

“Deity is not to be explained, but to be adored. The sonship of Christ is to be accepted as a truth of revelation apprehended by faith, though it cannot be comprehended by the understanding.” – **Charles Spurgeon**

Sustainer

“He upholds the universe, not like Atlas supporting a dead weight on his shoulders, but as One who carries all things forward on their appointed course...” – **F.F. Bruce**

Like how Amazon drivers are delivering all those billions of packages to their appointed course, so Jesus is delivering all things to their appointed course, which is ultimately for His glory and our good if we are in Him

Purifier

The last two statements are the statements of the exaltation of Jesus as the High Priest.

The primary purpose for Jesus' coming was to purify His people of their sins. This could only be done through a substitutionary atonement, with Himself being the sacrifice on His people's behalf.

This brings us into the very deep heartbeat of God for us!

“In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” – **1 John 4:9-10**

Jesus went sent into the world out of the love of the Father to give us life. This life is found in the substitutionary atonement (propitiation) that Jesus offers in His death and resurrection. It is through Jesus' death that our consciences are purified and we can be in the presence of God, to be His children and special treasure and inheritance! There is no other source of purification from our sin than in the person and finished work of Jesus Christ at the cross. This is His exalted work and offering as the Great High Priest.

We must daily attend to the ministry of our High Priest to purify our own consciences and to help us to live a life which honors Him in the world. Have you trusted in His work for your life? Are there ways that you seek to still make yourself right when you have done something wrong? Nothing else other than Christ will ever truly cleanse you and make you clean to come to God

Ruler

The second statement is that of the High Priest sitting down, His work completed. The work of the priests at the tabernacle and temple were never done, and while they were on duty they never sat down. However, Jesus' fulfillment of the Law and the Passover sacrifice means that the work is completed, He could sit down and reign as the benevolent Lord of His people. Jesus is the Great High King who desires and commands our allegiance and devotion.

“If you are the Christ, tell us.” But he said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” – **Luke 22:67-69**

The religious leaders of Jesus' day did not recognize the authority and ruling power that He had, and even when Jesus declared and showed it to them, they still were hardened of heart and disbelieved. They were condemned by God and cast into hell because of their unbelief and hard hearts.

“...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed...” – **2 Thessalonians 1:7-10**

This description of Paul of the second coming of Jesus ought to encourage us who are in Christ because we will see the forever reign of our God. It ought to cause those who are not yet in Christ to

turn to Him now and be saved from this day! Jesus is ruling and reigning in part now by the presence of His Holy Spirit in the Church and in the souls of individual believers. We are beneficiaries and bearers of the presence and kingdom of heaven now, to be marveled at in full when He comes again.

Jesus is the RULER! Ultimately, at the end of the day, our truest and strongest allegiance must be to Christ. Our truest and strongest devotion must be to the Son of God, who is the inheritor, creator, radiator, and representer of God, the sustainer of the universe, and the purifier of His people.

Well, we covered a lot today, and took a long look at the marvelous nature of God speaking and revealing Himself in the person of His Son. I come back to the question I asked: What is the vision of the good life that you are pursuing now? What is the purpose of your life? Is it still all about you or is it to know Christ and make Him known in the world? Do your plans and purposes submit to Christ, or are you still seeking control? I want to end with these verses of Paul to the Philippians as we prepare to respond:

“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
– **Philippians 2:9-11**

How will you bow? In reverence, awe, worship, and delight? Or in judgment to receive the punishment of your sin and rejection of His grace in your life?

Closing Prayer

God of all grace! You have given us a Savior! Produce in us a faith to live by Him, to make Him all of our desire, all our hope, and all our glory. May we come to Him as the true refuge, build on Him as our foundation, walk in Him as our way, follow Him as our guide, conform to Him as our example, receive His instructions as our Prophet, rely on His intercession as our High Priest, and obey Him as our King. May we feel that we are strangers and pilgrims on earth, declaring plainly that we seek a better land, our title to it becoming daily more clear, our fitness for it more perfect, and our foretastes of it more abundant; and whatever we do may it be done in the Savior's name.

Amen.

Lord's Supper

Here at the table we see the glory of the Son in making purification for sins. His body broken for us so that we might only endure spiritual brokenness over our sins, and His blood shed for us so that we may be healed from our spiritual brokenness. Here we declare that Jesus is our Great High Priest and High King, we declare our truest and strongest allegiance to Him and to Him alone. May we find rest for our souls in this time, and experience our consciences being cleansed by His blood.