

“Behold Your God”

Hebrews 1:1-3

January 21, 2018

PRAYER of Reverence! (Lord, please blow us away today!)

INTRO: Let me begin by asking you **5 Questions...**

- **WHAT** do YOU... THINK about God?
- **WHERE** do you think about God?
- **WHEN** do you think about God?
- **HOW** do you think about God?
- **WHY** do you think about God?

T/S: I hope to humble you today... & help to heal your heart!

TEXT: **Hebrews 1:1-3 (ESV)**

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,

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,

BIG IDEA: **“Behold Your God!”**

(We need to have a **reverent love affair** with the LORD!)

T/S: We need to worship & revere Father, Son, & Spirit!

PREVIEW:

- A. LOOK
- B. LEARN
- C. LISTEN
- D. LOVE
- E. LIVE

T/S: I pray this time will truly put you in AWE of God!

In same way that we study the Word of God as a means of bringing glory to the God of the Word, so it is that before we can see Hebrews' relationship to God, we need to grasp God's relationship to Hebrews. - JDP

A. LOOK

➤ Let's look at our text again...Hebrews 1:1-3 (ESV)

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,

- Review last 2 weeks...
- See here Christ's description as:
 - Prophet
 - Priest
 - King!
- See a whole lot more beginning to unfold here...
- See the foundation of so much Christian doctrine
 - Doctrine of **REVELATION**
 - Doctrine of the **TRINITY**
 - Doctrine of **CREATION**
 - Doctrine of **END-TIMES** (Jesus is Heir)
 - Doctrine of **CHRISTOLOGY / LORDSHIP**
 - Doctrine of **SIN**
 - Doctrine of the **GOSPEL** (sub. atonement)
 - Doctrine of **HOLINESS** (God's standard(s))
 - Doctrine of God's **NEW COVENANT**
 - Doctrine of **MISSIONS**

VIDEO: *"The Word of God & God of the Word"*

B. LEARN

- Key text: *"He has spoken to us by His Son"*
 - Doctrine of **REVELATION**
 - Doctrine of the **TRINITY**

➤ Is our learning in line with our LORD's teaching?

➤ **Ask yourself again:**

- **WHAT** do you think about God?
- **WHERE** do you think about God?
- **WHEN** do you think about God?
- **HOW** do you think about God?
- **WHY** do you think about God?

VIDEO: *"Interviews"*

T/S: **7 expressions of Jesus Christ's excellency:**

- Heir of all creation
- Creator of all creation
- Radiance of God's glory
- Exact imprint of God's nature
- Sustainer of the cosmos & all creation
- Savior of all Christian souls
- The completing King of heaven & earth!

C. LISTEN

➤ Key text: *"whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world."*

- Doctrine of **CREATION**

- Doctrine of **END-TIMES** (Jesus is Heir)
- Doctrine of **CHRISTOLOGY / LORDSHIP**

- **Listen...we don't "fix" or improve on God's ways!**
- We need to listen in two ways:
 - Listen to God's "**guard rails**" (learn Word)
 - Listen for God's **guidance** (living Spirit)
- We need to **listen to BOTH**... the Lord's:
 - **Message** (AND)
 - **Methods!**

VIDEO: "God on Pragmatism"

"In a day with so such confusion... in a day almost exactly like the NT days... with so many god's and so many opinions... If God's people will live what they know... the world will come to Him... Everything you need to know has been given to you in Christ... walk in it... that the world may know!"

- Dr. Bob Utley

D. LOVE

- Key text: 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,**

- Doctrine of **CHRISTOLOGY / LORDSHIP**
- Doctrine of **SIN**
- Doctrine of the **GOSPEL** (sub. atonement)
- Doctrine of **HOLINESS** (God's standard(s))
- Doctrine of God's **NEW COVENANT**

Just as the rays of the sun light and warm the earth, so Jesus Christ is the glorious light of God shining into the hearts of men... Jesus Christ is the radiance of God's glory, and He can transmit that light into your life and my life, so that we, in turn, can radiate the glory of God. – MacArthur

VIDEO: *“True Christology begets LOVE!”*

Campbell Morgan:

“When the church ceases to lift Christ to the height where all people can see him, it becomes useless and a fraud...” (cf. Col. 1:16; Rom. 11:36; Acts 2:36)

E. LIVE

- Key text: **He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,**
 - Doctrine of **END-TIMES** (Jesus is Heir)
 - Doctrine of **CHRISTOLOGY / LORDSHIP**
 - Doctrine of **MISSIONS**

- Christ's mission trip "is finished"
- Now His following missionaries begin!

- **Can you see this in your mind's eye???**
- How are you thinking about God NOW?
- WHY are you thinking about God that way now?
- What does all this do to you & your daily life???

VIDEO: "God on Christ-likeness"

CLOSE:

Hebrews 1:1-3 (ESV)

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,

T/S: *Here we have God's portrait of Jesus Christ.*

We have seen Him as prophet, the final spokesman for God. We have seen Him as priest, atoning and interceding. We have seen Him as King, controlling, sustaining, and seated on a throne. This is our Lord Jesus Christ.

Behold your God!

- See... Prophet, Priest, & King
- See... **7 expressions of His excellency:**
 - Heir of all creation
 - Creator of all creation
 - Radiance of God's glory
 - Exact imprint of God's nature
 - Sustainer of the cosmos & all creation
 - Savior of all Christian souls
 - The completing King of heaven & earth!

Behold your God!

Dear brothers & sisters, I pray you realize that ANYTHING & EVERYTHING that God has ever said, done, or intended, (from long ago – Creation – to the last of last days – Consummation) is for God's glory... is shared by God's grace, and is explained by God's gospel of Jesus, the Christ – who is our One & only LORD... & eternal Savior. Amen & Amen! - JDP

Let's PRAY!

Prep Notes:

I am here today, in part, in hopes of humbling you & helping to heal your heart.

In same way that we study the Word of God as a means of bringing glory to the God of the Word, so it is that before we can see Hebrews' relationship to God, we need to grasp God's relationship to Hebrews. - JDP

See... Jeremiah 9:23

See... 1 Cor. 1:23

Hebrews 1:1-3 (ESV)

- 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,*

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,*

1. **Jesus** is *“heir of all things”*
2. **Jesus** is Creator God who *“created the world”*
3. **Jesus** is *“the radiance of the glory of God”*
4. **Jesus** is *“the exact imprint of God’s nature”*
5. **Jesus** is the One who *“upholds the universe by the word of His power”*
6. **Jesus** is *“making purification for sins”*
7. **Jesus** is *“sitting down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”*

CONTEXTUAL REVIEW:

1. *“Long ago, at many times & in many ways, God spoke”*
 - Our God is a committed, consistent, and creative Communicator
 - Note: we’re not talking “content” yet, but we are establishing God’s character traits
2. *“to our fathers, by the prophets”*
 - Our God is a relational God who informs, inspects, & inspires His people... by His people, with His Scriptural “truth in love”
 - Note: we’re not discussing the particulars of God’s talk yet, but rather, we realize that God’s “team” is a divine design!
3. *“but, in these last days, He has spoken to us”*
 - Our God is a patient, personal, gracious and amazingly-merciful God

- Our God is a consistent AND persistent, a personal & progressive, promise-keeping God

4. *“by His Son”*

- Our God is a Trinitarian God
- Our God is a sending God (see Parable)
- Our God is Himself THE Missionary God
- Our God is an invested, ALL-in God
- Our God is a hands-on, in the trenches God

A. *“whom He appointed heir of all things”*

- Our God is & will always be the owner & controller of ALL things in & of creation
- Our God is & will always be large & in charge!”
- “Regardless of what some-one (or any great multitude of people) may wish or want, think or believe... ALL roads within ALL of creation... past, present & future, lead to the eternally-determinant, biblical & biding finish-line that IS the Judgement Seat of Christ! Make no mistake... Jesus... and one’s relationship to HIM (per His Scriptures & HIS standards) will determine & dictate EVERY person’s ETERNAL destination & residence... be that a triumphant-heaven or a timeless, torturous-hell. May we all respond appropriately... be we lost OR found - whether we need to come & surrender or go and share - may we all respond appropriately. Amen & Amen.” - JDP

B. *“through whom also He created the world.”*

- See the full affects of “Creator Christ”
- Connect this phrase with John 1:1-18
- Our God SPOKE creation into being!”
- Our God is the one & only CREATOR!

“ALL that is... comes from I AM!” - jdp
 Think about that via the cosmos.....

C. *“He is the radiance of the glory of God”*

- Break this phrase down into 3 parts...
 - ~ “He is the radiance...” (A)
 - ~ “of the glory of God...” (B)
 - ~ “He is (A) + (B)... (C)
- A + B = C... C = Jesus IS God!
- Note: we need to unpack “reflection”
 - ~ “reflection” should be “radiates”
 - ~ See the Gk & theological importance...
 - * Reflections produce “images”
 - * Radiates = imparts & imprints Source
- Unpack “glory of God”
- He is The Truth that can set you free!

Truth alone does not save...

Not even His truth, without Him will save
 Jesus saves... and that’s His Truth!

“Knowing truth is an essential perquisite
 to knowing Truth.” - JDP

- He is UNDER our foundation

Jesus is not our foundation...
Jesus is our foundation's foundation!
Jesus is the Petra for all petros...
- He is both just & Justifier!

Jesus is both the message & Messenger

D. *“and”* = conjunction (more & more...)

E. (He is) *“the exact imprint of His nature”*

- “imprint” is a key Gk. word...
 - ~ Gk examples:
 - * Markings pressed into a coin
 - * Design etched into clay pottery
 - ~ It goes beyond “image”
 - * Image merely appears to be the same
 - * Imprint transfers exact 3D likeness
 - * I.e. contrast magicians trick vs miracle
- “His nature”
 - ~ God's unique & complete self...
 - ~ This is a declaration of Jesus' deity!

F. *“and”* = conjunction (multi-faceted)

G. *“He upholds the universe”*

“by the word of His power.”

- See that He is both/and...Creator/Sustainer
- Note what is required & results from...

- See relationship... He speaks & sustains
 - ~ Our sanctification is a means of His sust.
- Explain "universe" = all spheres of reality
 - ~ Time, Space, Matter, Humanity, etc.

H. *"After making purification for sins,"*

- See the God/man that is Jesus the Christ
 - ~ See "Son of God" text's
 - ~ See "Son of man" texts
- Unpack "making purification for sins"
 - ~ Contrast the "long ago" & "last days"
 - ~ Introduce the Book of Leviticus!
 - ~ Explain the work of the cross
 - ~ Explain the proof of the resurrection
 - ~ Explain the culmination in the "Great C's"
- *** "A new covenant I will make with you & I will remember your sins no more."

Hebrews 8:12 (11-13)

*** Jeremiah 31:34 (31-34) ***

Isaiah 43:25

I. *"He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high"*

- "sat down" implies completion
 - ~ See 2 Peter 1:3
 - ~ See: "It is finished!"
 - ~ All that is left now is for Him to return
- "at the right hand"
 - ~ This is the designated position of:

* Power

* Authority

~ This is representative of subordination

- “of the Majesty” = God the Father
- “on high” = in heaven

See Psalm 19 (cf. Roman 1-2)

- vv 1-6 = General Revelation
- vv 7-12 = Special Revelation

New Covenant:

- Jeremiah 31:31-34 (foretold)
- Ezekiel 36:22-38 (described)
- Acts 15 Jerusalem Council (old cov not for us)
- Galatians 3 = explains reason for O.T.
- Hebrews = Commentary on OT; points @ Jesus

7 Divine Descriptions:

*** 1-5 = Prophet; 6 = Priest; 7 = King ***

1. Owner/Heir of all that is
2. Creator of all that is
3. Radiance/reality of His glory
4. Exact representation of His nature (Col 1:13ff)
5. Upholds all things by the word of His power
6. After making purification for sins
 - cf. Mark 10:45... 2 Cor 5:21...
 - Substitutionary atonement!

- Thus... you can come boldly to your King!
- 7. He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty...
- See Psalm 110 (

“In a day with so such confusion... in a day almost exactly like the NT days... with so many god’s and so many opinions... If God’s people will live what they know... the world will come to Him... Everything you need to know has been given to you in Christ... walk in it... that the world may know!” - Dr. Bob Utley

Christ = Messiah (The anointed offices in OT)

1. Prophet
2. Priest
3. King

The Surpassing Dignity of the Son of God in His Divine Person, and in His Creating and Mediatorial Work ([1:1-3](#))

God spake to his ancient people at sundry times, through successive generations, and in divers manners, as he thought proper; sometimes by personal directions, sometimes by dreams, sometimes by visions, sometimes by Divine influences on the minds of the prophets. The gospel revelation is excellent above the former; in that it is a revelation which God has made by his Son. In beholding the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ, we behold the power, wisdom, and

goodness of the Father, [John 14:7](#); the fulness of the Godhead dwells, not typically, or in a figure, but really, in him. When, on the fall of man, the world was breaking to pieces under the wrath and curse of God, the Son of God, undertaking the work of redemption, sustained it by his almighty power and goodness. From the glory of the person and office of Christ, we proceed to the glory of his grace. The glory of His person and nature, gave to his sufferings such merit as was a full satisfaction to the honour of God, who suffered an infinite injury and affront by the sins of men. We never can be thankful enough that God has in so many ways, and with such increasing clearness, spoken to us fallen sinners concerning salvation. That he should by himself cleanse us from our sins is a wonder of love beyond our utmost powers of admiration, gratitude, and praise.

Matthew Henry Concise Bible Commentary.

In these last days. The last days are days of fulfillment. In the Old Testament the Jew saw the last days as the time when all the promises would be fulfilled. In these days Messiah would come and the Kingdom would come and salvation would come and Israel would no longer be under bondage. In the last days promises would stop and fulfillments begin. That is exactly what Jesus came to do. He came to fulfill the promises. Even though the millennial, earthly aspect of the promised Kingdom is yet future, the age of kingdom fulfillment began when Jesus arrived, and it will not finally be completed until we enter into the eternal heavens. The Old Testament age of promise ended when Jesus arrived.

Has spoken to us in His Son. Jesus Christ is the revelation of God climaxed. God fully expressed Himself in His Son. That affirms Christ as being more than just human. It makes Him infinitely superior to any

created being, for He is God manifest in the flesh. He is the final and last revelation of God, in whom all God's promises are fulfilled.

We have looked at the preparation for Christ and the presentation of Christ. Now we will look at His preeminence. In this brief but potent section ([1:2-3](#)) the Holy Spirit exalts Christ as the full and final expression of God—superior to and exalted above anyone or anything. In these verses we see Christ as the end of all things (Heir), the beginning of all things (Creator), and the middle of all things (Sustainer and Purifier).

When the question is brought up as to who Jesus Christ really was, some people will say He was a good teacher, some will say He was a religious fanatic, some will say He was a fake, and some will claim He was a criminal, a phantom, or a political revolutionary. Others are likely to believe that He was the highest form of humankind, who had a spark of divinity which He fanned into flame—a spark, they claim, that all of us have but seldom fan. There are countless human explanations as to who Jesus was. In this chapter we are going to look at what God says about who Jesus was, and *is*. In just half of verse 2 and in verse 3 is a sevenfold presentation of the excellencies of Jesus Christ. In all these excellencies He is clearly much more than a man.

1. His Heirship

Jesus' first excellency mentioned here is His heirship: **In these last days [God] has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things. If Jesus is the Son of God, then He is the heir of all that God possesses.** Everything that exists will find its true meaning only when it comes under the final control of Jesus Christ.

Even the Psalms predicted that He would one day be the heir to all that God possesses. "But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain. I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, 'Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee'" ([Ps. 2:6-7](#)). Again we read, "'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, Thou shalt shatter them like earthenware'" ([Ps. 2:8-9](#)). And still again, "'I also shall make him My first-born, the highest of the kings of the earth'" ([Ps. 89:27](#)). "First-born" does not mean that Christ did not exist before He was born as Jesus in Bethlehem. It is not primarily a chronological term at all, but has to do with legal rights—especially those of inheritance and authority (which will be discussed in more detail in [chapter 3](#)). God's destined kingdom will in the last days be given finally and eternally to Jesus Christ.

Paul explains that all things not only were created *by* Christ but *for* Him ([Col. 1:16](#)) and that "*from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen*" ([Rom. 11:36](#)). Everything that exists exists for Jesus Christ. What truth better proves His equality with God?

In [Revelation 5](#), God is pictured sitting on a throne, with a scroll in His hand. "And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals" ([v. 1](#)). The scroll is the title deed to the earth and all that is in it. It is the deed for the Heir, the One who has the right to take the earth. In New Testament times Roman law required that a will had to be sealed seven times, to protect it from tampering. As you rolled it up, you sealed it every turn or so for seven times. The seals were not to be broken until after the person whose will it was had died.

John continues his vision: "And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?'" ([v. 2](#)). Who, the angel wondered, is the rightful heir to the earth? Who has the right to possess it? "And no one in heaven, or on the earth, or under

the earth, was able to open the book, or to look into it" ([v. 3](#)). Perplexed and saddened, John "began to weep greatly, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look into it; and one of the elders said to me, 'Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals'" ([vv. 4-5](#)). As he continued to watch, he "saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth" ([v. 6](#)). Jesus Christ, the Lamb, came and took the scroll out of the right hand of God. Why? Because He, and He alone, had a right to take it. He is Heir to the earth.

Chapter 6 of Revelation begins the description of the Tribulation, the first step in Christ's taking back the earth, which is rightfully His. One by one Christ unrolls the seals. As each seal is broken, He takes further possession and control of His inheritance. Finally, "the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever'" ([11:15](#)). When He unrolls the seventh seal and the seventh trumpet blows, the earth is His.

In his first sermon, at Pentecost, Peter told his Jewish audience, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). This carpenter who died nailed to a cross is, in fact, the King of kings and Lord of lords. He will rule the world. Satan knew this truth when he approached Jesus in the wilderness and tempted Him to take control of the world in the wrong way, by bowing down to Satan. As the temporary usurper of God's rule over the earth, Satan continually tries every means of preventing the true Heir from receiving His inheritance.

When Christ first came to earth He became poor for our sakes, that we, through His poverty, might be made rich. He had nothing for Himself. He had "nowhere to lay His head" ([Luke 9:58](#)). Even His clothes were

taken from Him when He died. He was buried in a grave that belonged to someone else. But when Christ comes to earth again, He will completely and eternally inherit all things. **And, wonder of wonders, because we have trusted in Him, we are to be "*fellow heirs with Christ*" (Rom. 8:16-17).** **When we enter into His eternal kingdom we will jointly possess all that He possesses. *We will not be joint Christs or joint Lords, but we will be joint heirs.* His marvelous inheritance will be ours as well.**

Some Still Reject Him

Amazingly, though Christ is the Heir of all God possesses, and though He offers to share His inheritance with anyone who will trust in Him, some still reject Him. Many rejected God as He revealed Himself in the Old Testament. Now God has perfectly revealed Himself in the New Testament of His Son, and people continue to reject Him.

Jesus illustrated this tragedy in a parable.

There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey. And when the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. And the vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, "They will respect my son." But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and seize his inheritance." And they took him, and threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers? They said to Him, "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers, who will pay him the proceeds at the

proper seasons." Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone; this came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it. And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust." ([Matt. 21:33-44](#))

That parable needs no explanation.

To willfully reject Jesus Christ brings on the utter damnation and destruction of a vengeful God. To Israel that parable says, "Since what you have done was so blatant, not only rejecting and killing the prophets but rejecting and killing the Son, the promise has been taken away from you and given to a new nation, the church." Israel was set aside until the time of her restoration.

2. His Creatorship

The second excellency of Christ mentioned in [Hebrews 1](#) is His creatorship: **through whom also He made the world.** Christ is the agent through whom God created the world. *"All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being"* ([John 1:3](#)). One of the greatest proofs of Jesus' divinity is His ability to create. Except for His complete sinlessness, His total righteousness, nothing more sets Him apart from us than His creatorship. *Ability to create (ex-nilo) belongs to God alone and the fact that Jesus creates indicates that He is God.* He created everything material and everything spiritual. **Though man has stained His work with sin, Christ originally made it good, and the very creation itself longs to be restored to what it was in the beginning** ([Rom. 8:22](#)).

The common Greek word for world is *kosmos*, but that is not the word used in [Hebrews 1:2](#). The word here is *aiōnas*, which does not mean the material world but "the ages," as it is often translated. Jesus Christ is responsible not only for the physical earth; He is also responsible for creating time, space, energy, and matter. Christ created the whole universe and everything that makes it function, and He did it all without effort.

Sir John C. Eccles, nobel laureate in neurophysiology, said that the odds against the right combination of circumstances occurring to have evolved intelligent life on earth are highly improbable, but he went on to say he believed that such did occur but could never happen again on any planet or in any other solar system ("Evolution and the Conscious Self," in *The Human Mind: A Discussion at the Nobel Conference*, John D. Rolansky, ed. [Amsterdam: North Holland, 1967]). If you do not recognize a Creator you have quite a problem explaining how this marvelous, intricate, immeasurable universe came into being.

Yet thousands upon thousands of men believe that man emerged out of primeval slime. Man just evolved—that wondrous creature whose heart beats 800 million times in a normal lifetime and pumps enough blood to fill a string of tank cars running from Boston to New York; that same man whose tiny cubic half-inch section of brain cells contains all the memories of a lifetime; that same man whose ear transfers sound waves from air to liquid without losing any sound.

A. K. Morrison, another brilliant scientist, tells us that conditions for life on earth demand so many billions of minute interrelated circumstances appearing simultaneously, in the same infinitesimal moment, that such a prospect becomes beyond belief and beyond possibility.

[Consider the vastness of our universe. If you could somehow put 1.2 million earths inside the sun, you would have room left for 4.3 million moons. The sun is 865,000 miles in diameter and is 93 million miles from the earth. Our next nearest star, Alpha Centauri, is 5 times larger than our sun. The moon is only 211,463 miles away, and you could walk](#)

to it in 27 years. A ray of light travels at 186 thousand miles per second, so a beam of light would reach the moon in only 1 1/2 seconds. If we could travel at that speed, it would take 2 minutes and 18 seconds to reach Venus, 4 1/2 minutes to reach Mercury, 1 hour and 11 seconds to reach Saturn, and so on. To reach Pluto, 2.7 billion miles from earth, would take nearly 4 hours. Having got that far, we would still be well inside our own solar system. The North Star is 400 trillion miles away, but is still nearby in relation even to known space. The star Betelgeuse is 880 quadrillion miles (880 followed by fifteen zeroes) from us. It has a diameter of 250 million miles, which is greater than that of the earth's orbit.

Where did it all come from? Who conceived it? Who made it? It cannot be an accident. Somebody had to make it, and the Bible tells us the Maker was Jesus Christ.

3. His Radiance

Third, we see Christ's radiance, *the brightness of the glory of God*. **And He is the radiance of His glory.** *Radiance* (*apaugasma*, "to send forth light") represents Jesus as the manifestation of God. He expresses God to us. No one can see God; no one ever will. The only radiance that reaches us from God is mediated to us from Jesus Christ. **Just as the rays of the sun light and warm the earth, so Jesus Christ is the glorious light of God shining into the hearts of men. Just as the sun was never without and cannot be separated from its brightness, so God was never without and cannot be separated from the glory of Christ. Never was God without Him or He without God, and never in any way can He be separated from God.** Yet the brightness of the sun is not the sun. Neither is Christ God in that sense. He is fully and absolutely God, yet is a distinct Person.

We would never be able to see or enjoy God's light if we did not have Jesus to look at. Standing one day before the Temple, **Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).**

Jesus Christ is the radiance of God's glory, and He can transmit that light into your life and my life, so that we, in turn, can radiate the glory of God. We live in a dark world. There is the darkness of injustice, of failure, privation, separation, disease, death, and of much else. There is the moral darkness of men blinded by their godless appetites and passions. Into this dark world God sent His glorious Light. Without the Son of God, there is only darkness.

The great tragedy, of course, is that most men do not want even to see, much less accept and live in, God's light. **Paul explains that "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4).**

God sent His light in the Person of Jesus Christ, that man might behold, accept, and radiate that light.

But Satan has moved through this world to blind the minds of men and prevent the light of the glorious gospel from shining on them.

Those, however, who receive His light can say, "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). That is what happens when God comes into your life.

The hymn writer said, "Come to the light. 'Tis shining for thee. Sweetly the light has dawned upon me." What a wonderful thing to realize that

Jesus Christ, who is the full expression of God in human history, can come into our lives and give us light to see and to know God. His light, in fact, gives us life itself, spiritual life. And, His light gives us purpose, meaning, happiness, peace, joy, fellowship, everything—for all eternity.

4. His Being

Christ's next excellency is His being. **And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature.**

Jesus Christ is the express image of God. Christ not only was God manifest, He was God in substance.

Exact representation translates the Greek term used for the impression made by a die or stamp on a seal.

The design on the die is reproduced on the wax. **Jesus Christ is the reproduction of God.**

He is the perfect, personal imprint of God in time and space.

Colossians 1:15 gives a similar illustration of this incomprehensible truth: ***"He is the image of the invisible God."***

The word ***"image" here is eikōn***, from which we get ***icon Eikōn*** means **a precise copy, an exact reproduction, as in a fine sculpture or portrait.** To call Christ the *Eikōn* of God means He is the exact reproduction of God. ***"For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form"*** (**Col. 2:9**).

5. His Administration

Also in [Hebrews 1:3](#) is given the fifth of Christ's excellencies, His **administration, or sustenance**. He **upholds all things by the word of His power**.

Christ not only made all things and will someday inherit all things, but He holds them all together in the meanwhile.

The Greek word for upholds means "to support, to maintain," and it is used here in the present tense, implying continuous action. Everything in the universe is sustained right now by Jesus Christ.

We base our entire lives on the continuance, the constancy, of laws. When something such as an earthquake comes along and disrupts the normal condition or operation of things even a little, the consequences are often disastrous. Can you imagine what would happen if Jesus Christ relinquished His sustaining power over the laws of the universe? We would go out of existence. **If He suspended the law of gravity only for a brief moment, we would all perish, in unimaginable ways.**

If the physical laws varied, we would have an unbelievable mess. We could not exist. What we ate could turn to poison. We could not stay on the earth; we would drift out into space. We would get flooded by the oceans periodically. Countless other horrible things would happen, many of which we could not even guess.

Consider, for example, what instant destruction would happen if the earth's rotation slowed down just a little. The sun has a surface temperature of 12,000 degrees Fahrenheit. If it were any closer to us we would burn up; if it were any farther away we would freeze. Our globe is tilted on an exact angle of 23 degrees, providing us with four seasons. If it were not so tilted, vapors from the oceans would move north and south and develop into monstrous continents of ice. If the moon did not retain its exact distance from the earth the ocean tides would inundate the land completely, twice a day. After the first flooding, of course, the others

would not matter as far as we would be concerned. **If the ocean floors were merely a few feet deeper than they are, the carbon dioxide and oxygen balance of the earth's atmosphere would be completely upset, and no animal or plant life could exist.** If the atmosphere did not remain at its present density, but thinned out even a little, many of the meteors which now harmlessly burn up when they hit the atmosphere would constantly bombard us. We would have to live underground or in meteor-proof buildings.

How does the universe stay in this kind of fantastically delicate balance? Jesus Christ sustains and monitors all its movements and inter-workings. Christ, the preeminent Power, maintains it all.

Things do not happen in our universe by accident.

They did not happen that way in the beginning. They are not going to happen that way in the end, and they are not happening that way now.

Jesus Christ is sustaining the universe. He is Himself the principle of cohesion. He is not like the deist's "watchmaker" creator, who made the world, set it in motion, and has not bothered with it since. **The universe is a cosmos instead of chaos**, an ordered and reliable system instead of an erratic and unpredictable muddle, only because Jesus Christ upholds it.

Scientists who discover great and amazing truths are doing nothing but discovering a few of the laws that Jesus Christ designed and uses to control the world.

No scientist or mathematician, no astronomer or nuclear physicist, could do anything without the upholding power of Jesus Christ. The whole universe hangs on the arm of Jesus. His unsearchable wisdom and boundless power are manifested in governing the universe. And He does

it by the word of His power, without effort. **The key to the creation story in Genesis is in two words, "God said." God spoke and it happened.**

When I think about Christ's power to uphold the universe, that truth goes right to my heart. We read in **Philippians 1:6** the wonderful promise, *"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."* When Christ begins a work in your heart, He holds onto it and sustains it all the way through. We can **imagine Jude's excitement** when he wrote, *"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen"* (**Jude 24-25**).

When your life is given to Jesus Christ, He holds it and sustains it and one day will take it into God's very presence.

A life, just as a universe, that is not sustained by Christ is chaos.

6. His Sacrifice

The sixth excellency of Christ is His sacrifice: **When He had made purification of sins. What a tremendous statement!**

The Bible says the wages of sin is death. Jesus Christ went to the cross, died our deserved death for us, and thereby took the penalty

for our sin on Himself. If we will accept His death and believe that He died for us, He will free us from the penalty of sin and purify us from the stain of sin.

It was a wondrous work when Jesus Christ created the world. It is wondrous that He sustains the world. But a greater work than making and upholding the world is that of purging men of sin. **In Hebrews 7:27 we are told that Jesus "does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself."**

In the Old Testament the priests had to make sacrifice after sacrifice, for themselves and for the people. **Jesus made but one sacrifice. He not only was the Priest, but also the Sacrifice.**

And because His sacrifice was pure, He can purify our sins—something that all the Old Testament sacrifices together could not do.

And not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?...but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (Heb. 9:12-14, 26b)

Jesus Christ dealt with the sin problem once and for all. It had to be done. **We could not communicate with God or enter into fellowship with Him unless sin was dealt with.** So Christ went to the cross and bore the penalty of sin for all who would accept His sacrifice, believe in Him, and receive Him. Sin was purged, wiped out.

This truth must have seemed especially remarkable to those to whom the book of Hebrews was first written. The cross was a stumbling block to Jews, but the writer does not apologize for it. Instead, he shows it to be one of the seven excellent glories of Christ.

His words are as straightforward as those of Peter: *"[You know] that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ"* ([1 Pet. 1:18-19](#)).

We are all sinners. And either we pay the penalty for our own sin, which is eternal death, or we accept Jesus Christ's payment for it in sacrificing Himself, for which we receive eternal life. If the desire of our heart is to receive Him as Savior, to believe in and to accept His sacrifice, our sins are washed away at that point. **The Bible says that *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness for sin* ([Heb. 9:22](#)) and that *"the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin"* ([1 John 1:7](#)).**

Jesus came as the perfect Sacrifice. The man whose sins are forgiven has them forgiven only because of Jesus Christ. But the blood of Jesus Christ will never be applied to us unless by faith we receive Him into our lives.

Yet again, there are people who reject Him! [Hebrews 10:26](#) warns, *"For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins."*

If we reject Jesus Christ there is nothing in the universe that can take away our sin, and we will die in it. **Jesus said to such persons, "[You]**

shall die in your sin; where I am going you can never come" ([John 8:21](#)).

7. His Exaltation

The last of Christ's excellencies mentioned in this passage is His exaltation. **He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.**

The Majesty on high is God.

The right hand is the power side.

Jesus took His place at the right hand of God.

*The marvelous thing about this statement is that Jesus, the perfect High Priest, **sat down**. This is in great contrast to the priestly procedure under the Old Covenant. There were no seats in the Tabernacle or the Temple sanctuaries. The priest had no place to sit because God knew it would never be appropriate for him to sit. His responsibility was to sacrifice, sacrifice, sacrifice, over and over again. So the priests offered sacrifices daily—and never sat down. But Jesus offered one sacrifice, and said, "It is finished." He then went and sat down with the Father. It was done. What could not be accomplished under the Old Covenant, even after centuries of sacrifices, was accomplished once by Jesus Christ for all time.*

Jesus' sitting down at His Father's right hand signifies at least four things. They are, briefly:

First, He sat down as **a sign of honor**, *"that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"* ([Phil. 2:11](#)). To be seated at the right hand of the Father is honor indeed.

Second, He sat down as **a sign of authority**. "[He] is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him" ([1 Pet. 3:22](#)). **He sat down as a ruler.**

Third, **He sat down to rest.** His work was done. *"But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God"* ([Heb. 10:12](#)).

Fourth, He sat down **to intercede for us.** *"Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us"* ([Rom. 8:34](#)). He is seated at the right hand of the Father making intercession for all of us who belong to Him.

Here we have God's portrait of Jesus Christ.

We have seen the preeminent Christ in all His offices.

We have seen Him as prophet, the final spokesman for God. We have seen Him as priest, atoning and interceding. We have seen Him as King, controlling, sustaining, and seated on a throne. This is our Lord Jesus Christ.

A man who says that Jesus Christ is anything less than this is a fool and makes God out a liar. God says that His Son is preeminent in all things.

What does this mean to us? It means everything.

To reject Him is to be shut out from His presence into an eternal hell. But to receive Jesus Christ is to enter into all that He is and has. There are no other choices.

- MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Hebrews.

The doctrinal sweep of these verses is breathtaking, making a major contribution to our understanding of the biblical doctrines of revelation, christology, soteriology, creation, and eschatology. The doctrine of revelation is reflected in [vv. 1-2](#) in that God has spoken not only in the past but now definitively in one who is by nature a Son. It is the fundamental proposition of the author of Hebrews, as of all the biblical writers, that one cannot know God unless God makes himself known. This he has done supremely in Jesus.

The majestic Christology places this paragraph alongside [John 1:1-18](#), [Phil 2:5-11](#) and [Col 1:15-18](#) as one of the four key christological passages in the New Testament.

Scarcely a major theological category is passed over in this panoramic paragraph. **Virtually ever single word is pregnant with meaning.**

THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

In light of the profound theological truths articulated in the prologue and its programmatic function for the entire discourse, an examination of the theological implications of this passage is expedient. **Issues of**

revelation, Christology, protology, soteriology, and eschatology are all found in this majestic paragraph.

1. Nature of Revelation. The central crisis of twentieth-century theology, which carried into the twenty-first century, is the nature of revelation. From its traditional theological formulation in orthodox theology, Carl Henry pointed out, it has of late "been stretched into everything and stripped into nothing." Many now find the concept of a God who reveals himself to be archaic. In fact, twentieth-century theologians questioned two foundational tenets of theology: (1) can God speak? and (2) can we speak of God? Both are language issues. K. Barth's refusal to equate Scripture with the Word of God exerts immense influence in contemporary theology. Likewise, the dawn of the new millennium came with a Christological crisis, fueled by the departure from Christian Scripture as divine revelation. **Hebrews 1:1-4 stands as a crucial corrective in these areas.**

Theologians permitted God to act in history and then identified this action as revelatory. This was fine as far as it goes, but the problem is that it did not go far enough. For the most part, theologians placed a gag order on God and would not permit him to speak verbally. But God's action is not speech-less any more than his speech is action-less. God's work and God's word are coherent. According to Hebrews (as well as all Scripture), God is self-communicative. Because God speaks in Jesus and because Jesus is God's living Word, "we do not know God against his will or behind his back, as it were, but in accordance with the way in which he has elected to disclose himself and communicate his truth."

Until the modern age, both Protestant and Catholic orthodoxy understood the Bible to be divine revelation in written form. Various forms of higher criticism have, since the nineteenth century, brought about a state of affairs whereby most non-evangelical theologians no longer equate Scripture with divine revelation. This state of affairs also affects how theologians view God's revelation in Christ as expressed in Heb 1:1-2.

Since the author began by stating that God spoke "through the prophets," it is appropriate to ask about the nature of God's speech through the prophets. The concept of revelation in the Old Testament means nothing less than the self-disclosure of God who is both the subject and the object of revelation. **Revelation is a personal encounter with the living God mediated through the Word of God.** The activity of God as a medium of his self-disclosure is so closely connected to the Word of God that they are sometimes inter-blended synonymously and simultaneously. In [Exodus 1-12](#) the word of God comes first, followed by the act of God. Thus, revelation is not contained in the deed only, but in the words of God that accompany that deed. **In fact, the word is confirmed by the deed. Further, all the appearances of God in the Old Testament are speaking appearances.** The phrase "Word of Yahweh" virtually represents a technical term for the prophetic revelation of the Word in the Old Testament.

This leads to the oft-debated question in modern theology as to the nature of God's revelation. When [Heb 1:1](#) refers to God speaking in a Son, is this to be interpreted literally or metaphorically? **To describe God as one who speaks must, according to many, be understood only in metaphorical terms. But the Old Testament as well as Hebrews indicates that "God spoke" is not a metaphor for non-verbal communication. The verb is being used literally and means that God has communicated with us "by means of significant utterances: statements, questions, and commands, spoken either in His own person or His behalf by his own appointed messengers. The rest of the epistle [Hebrews] makes this plain."**

2. Revelation in the Old Testament. According to [Heb 1:1](#), God spoke "at many times and in various ways" to the fathers by the prophets. Revelation in the Old Testament includes the media God used to express his word to Israel. Such media included verbal discourse, dreams, visions, signs, symbols, among others. Furthermore, the choice of vocabulary by Old Testament writers to express this revelation is both varied and precise. With respect to the prophets, the revelatory word of

the Lord always accompanied a vision or dream. Thus, revelation in visions is also verbal revelation. Interestingly, Jeremiah reported no visions accompanying his reception of the Word of the Lord, yet it came to him with all the immediacy of an objective experience that he described in terms of a dialogue between himself and God. In a similar vein, divine speech is never understood to be unambiguously divine since Samuel could mistake it for a human voice ([1 Sam 3:1-10](#)).

When it comes to the Old Testament prophet, Wolff identified an essential distinguishing feature as the "supremacy of the word." It is always *the Word*, never *a word of the Lord* that the prophet declares. It was the coming of the word of revelation-not the reception of the Spirit of revelation-that made a man a prophet of the Lord. **The most frequent of all the modes of communication used by God to disclose himself to humanity in the Bible is verbal discourse.** The term "word" in the sense of divine revelation is the most common term for revelation in the Old Testament. The phrase "word of the Lord" occurs 394 times in the Old Testament. The Lord's word was a medium of revelation throughout Old Testament history including the time of the patriarchs ([Gen 12:1-4](#); [15:1-7](#); [17:1-22](#); [Deut 1:8](#)), the Mosaic period ([Exod 3:4-4:17](#)), the united and divided kingdoms ([2 Sam 7:4](#); [23:2](#); [1 Kgs 17:2-18:1](#); [22:19](#); [22:5-13,19](#); [2 Kgs 1:3](#); [3:11-27](#)), and in the subsequent exilic and postexilic period ([Jer 37:16-17](#)).

Old Testament revelation was predominately verbal and auditory rather than visual. [Habakkuk 2:2](#) says that when visions are given, God sometimes instructs that they must be converted into written text. Similarly, [Rev 1:11](#) states that John is told to "write on a scroll what you see." The Old Testament prophets speak of God's actions as his "word." God was known to Israel in the Old Testament in and by his speaking. Throughout the Old Testament, God's revelation is identified with speaking and hearing, and with written text and the reading of written texts. Jesus made use of the spoken word exclusively according to the Gospel, and this may be invested with theological significance. In

continuity with this biblical focus, the author of Hebrews gave priority to the importance of hearing the Word.

3. Revelation as Verbal and Personal. So it is surprising that much of modern theology is unwilling to affirm that God's self-disclosure in the Old Testament was verbal. A prime example is E. Brunner's sub-conceptual doctrine of divine disclosure. He suggested that God only addresses us in transcendent personal confrontation. Brunner contrasted God's communication through Jesus with the "word of God" in prophets and apostles *a la* [Heb 1:1-2](#). But from this, Brunner drew a false conclusion that is contradicted by the book of Hebrews and its use of Old Testament quotations. "Now the old is over and past, even the Old Covenant with all the forms of revelation proper to it. These are all severed from the new revelation." This is exactly what Hebrews says has *not* happened! **There is continuity between the prophets and Jesus, and the authority of the Old Testament Scripture abides as evidenced by the use of the present tense citation formulae throughout Hebrews.** Brunner's erroneous trajectory continues when he said that there is still a relation between the revelation and the spoken word since the incarnation, but now the meaning of the phrase "word of God" has been drastically altered. "The spoken word is now no longer the revelation itself, or, to put it more exactly, it is no longer directly 'revelation,' but only indirectly." The spoken word is "an indirect revelation when it bears witness to the real revelation." This theological sleight of hand by Brunner should be challenged. What are the grounds for this conclusion? He offered none.

Brunner elaborated further that man's "reaction" to revelation in Christ can no longer be simply described as "hearing." The relation has now become personal: "The fact that He Himself takes the place of the spoken word is precisely the category which distinguishes the Old Testament revelation-the revelation through the speech-from the New Testament revelation, the revelation in Christ." In response to Brunner, when God spoke in the Old Testament, it was personal. Additionally, our relationship with the risen Lord is partly mediated by his written

Word. Since the words of Scripture cannot be revelational in Brunner's view, he effectively nullified his insistence that God speaks, even in Jesus. Modern theology desperately needs to heed the warning of **Carnell: "Protestants must recover the Reformation balance between revelation as a disclosure of God's person and revelation as a disclosure of God's will. The first is mystical and inward; the second, objective and propositional. If we drive a wedge between personal and propositional revelation, we evacuate Christian theology of its normative elements."** The **knowledge of God includes information from him and about him.** The knowledge of God about which the gospel speaks is both relational and informational. Views of revelation since the Enlightenment have tended to disconnect information and relationship, as seen in Brunner's approach. A. McGrath provided a balance in this area: "To assert that revelation involves information about God is not to deny that it can also involve the mediation of the presence of God, or the transformation of human experience."

This idea of revelation as "indirect speech" is not a scriptural notion, but rather one based upon a faulty philosophical premise harking back to the Kantian bifurcation and perpetuated by Kierkegaard's notion of "indirect revelation." K. Barth succumbed to this philosophical error and perpetuated it as a theological error in his refusal to equate Scripture with the very Word of God. Barth's threefold analogy of the Word of God (the Word of God preached in the church, written in Scripture, and revealed in Jesus Christ) is well known and is given considerable ink in his famous *Church Dogmatics*. But his concept of the word of God as "indirect identity" is the issue here. For Barth, revelation is first and foremost an event. The Scripture witnesses to this event of revelation in Christ. But here Barth ran into trouble with his trinitarian analogy of the Word of God. If the words of Jesus, as the "speech" of God, are truly the Word of God in human words (via the incarnation), then the words of Jesus in the Gospels do not "witness" to God's revelation, but are revelation. Furthermore, by virtue of a trinitarian understanding of

revelation, the words of the Old Testament prophets and the apostles of the New Testament likewise are the Word of God. They certainly claim to be so, and Paul understood them this way since the Old Testament is "the very words of God" ([Rom 3:2](#)).

In Barth's threefold analogy of the Word of God, Jesus is one form of the *Logos*. But Barth missed the point that in Scripture, Jesus is revealed as *the Logos*, not merely one form of the *Logos*. It is at this point that T. Work's trenchant critique of Barth's understanding of revelation is appropriate for our purposes in considering the theological implications of [Heb 1:1-4](#). Barth's trinitarian analogy for the Word of God cannot stand the strain he placed upon it. T. Work's probing questions reveal the problems for Barth. For example, if revelation is an event only, why does Scripture cite Scripture? Why would Jesus himself bother to practice Scripture? How can it be that during Jesus' childhood, past revelation tutors present revelation ([Luke 2:41-52](#))? Taking Barth's view of revelation as always an event, T. Work noted how Barth's notion of "indirectness of identity" between Scripture and the Word causes the Scripture to become revelation when it is so *used* by God (as an event). Barth's entire Trinitarian analogy of revelation is jeopardized when he failed to carry through the hypostatic union in the analogy. Barth replaced verbal union (Jesus and the words of Scripture) with verbal adoption (the words of Scripture are used by the *Logos* as "witness" to the Word), with a net loss for both Jesus as the Word and Scripture as the very words of the *Logos* as well. Barth took the position that human words were adopted and used by God as the Word of God since prophets and apostles, as human beings, cannot speak the Word of God. Of course, one of Barth's motivations for his theology of revelation was his commendable desire to protect God's transcendence. But when this is done at the expense of a full-orbed doctrine of revelation that not only includes events but words, the effect actually questions God's power to reveal himself in a true and accurate way.

T. F. Torrance succumbed to the Barthian error on Scripture as well. He attempted a linguistic justification for why Scripture is a "second-order"

revelation by arguing that the incarnate Word (Jesus) is not ontologically identical with Scripture since Scripture is "contingent upon and controlled" by the first-order relation of hypostatic union in Christ himself. Torrance correlated his understanding of revelation with the realist view of language as sign and reality signified. Words fulfill their semantic function when one looks away from them to the realities they signify. But Torrance, like Barth, failed to carry forth his analogy of the hypostatic union and instead replaced verbal union with verbal adoption. He assumed with no justification that human language is "utterly inadequate" to speak of God or convey divine truth. Somehow God "assumes, transforms and uses words so that they are made to indicate more than they can express beyond their natural capacity."

Revelation is an event, and supremely so in the person and work of Jesus Christ. But Jensen correctly stated,

[T]here is no need in limiting the event by declaring *a priori* that the giving of speech does not constitute an event. The mighty acts of God included mighty deeds of speech. Christianity is essentially promissory in nature, and the idea that we have in revelation the elusive speech-acts of God, intended though it is to preserve God's freedom, manages to compromise his faithfulness in speech.... Can we really arrive at the doctrine of the Trinity, given the "revelation as event" approach, or does it arise from the exact language of Scripture?

Even the deeds of Jesus recorded in the Gospels are accessible to us only verbally. Jensen also argued that it is not possible to call the Bible a witness to revelation:

When we obey his word, we obey him; when we trust his word, we trust him; when we preach his word, we preach him. He is not his word, and yet he is, for his word is the appointed place of our relationship. His word communicates his self to us: "If you remain in me and my words remain in you,..." ([John 15:7](#)).

T. Work showed where the approach of Barth (and Torrance) faces difficulty once the point is conceded that the human words of Jesus are truly the Word of God in human words. First, Jesus often cited Scripture along with his own words. Second, his endorsement of the Old Testament is complete ([Matt 4:4,7,10](#); [5:17-18](#)). Its words are his words. Work wondered how the biblical passages Jesus did not quote could have been any more indirect or derivative forms of revelation than those he did quote. Finally, T. Work concluded that despite Jesus' uniqueness, his words are no more divine than those of the prophets and the apostles. "Verbal union is not hypostatic union in that language is not full personhood. Inlibration [i.e., putting thoughts into written words] is not incarnation because words are not flesh... This means that God's presence in the human words of apostles, prophets... is real presence, but not full personal presence." God's revelation has one source: Jesus the divine Word and speech of God, as [Heb 1:1-2](#) affirms. It is the incarnation, assumed in the prologue of Hebrews and affirmed in [Hebrews 2](#) as well as throughout the epistle, which renders Barth's distinction between the Word of God and human words invalid.

[Hebrews 1:1-3](#) avoids two other errors Barth and his cadre espoused. First, if Scripture is equated with the Word of God, then there is the supposed danger in Barth's mind of this encroaching on the supremacy of Christ as presented in [1:1-4](#). But as T. Ward rightly observed, to succumb to this move "places Christian theology in danger of sawing off the branch on which it wishes to sit." The author of Hebrews exhibited his reverence for Scripture in his method of quotation as well as the use of it he makes in his theological argument. But he saw no danger of a high view of Scripture-where the words of Scripture are the very words of God-encroaching on the supremacy of Christ as God's final revelation. The author of Hebrews was able to hold in balance the twin truths of Christ as the Word of God and Scripture as the Word of God.

The second error is the notion that revelation is given only in Jesus. All else is, according to Barth, only witness to that revelation. Barth failed to take into account the continuity expressed in [Heb 1:1-2](#) where it is God

who speaks in both the Old Testament (and by implication from [v. 3](#), in the apostles) as well as in Jesus Christ. Barth's student, W. Pannenberg, even went so far as to state that the Word of God "never has in the Bible the direct sense of the self-disclosure or self-revelation of God, not even in [Heb. 1:1-2](#)." This is nothing short of dogmatic presupposition in the face of the clear teaching of Scripture. It is the consistent teaching of the New Testament, and especially Hebrews, that the revelation given outside Jesus (prophets and apostles) did not occur independently of Jesus as the *Logos*. Jesus stands in an inseparable and intimate relationship to the totality of God's disclosure by virtue of a trinitarian understanding of revelation.

When the continuity factor in [Heb 1:1-2](#) between God's revelation given by the prophets and given in Jesus is suppressed, or when the diversity factor is exaggerated, the result is a lopsided view of God's revelation in the Old Testament prophets that can ultimately lead to a denial that God spoke his word through them. In reference to [Heb 1:1-2](#), Packer noted that the 66 books of the Bible are both the product and the proclamation of this revelatory process. Revelation is a divine activity that in form was verbal and cumulative. It is clear that the author of Hebrews regarded all the Old Testament as not only revelation from God, but verbal revelation from God. His entire epistle is based on several crucial Old Testament passages of Scripture. Furthermore, his method of quoting the Old Testament with formulae such as "God says" and "the Holy Spirit says," combined with his frequent use of the present tense to introduce Old Testament citations, underscore this as well.

When the contrast in [Heb 1:1-2](#) is overemphasized to the neglect of its continuity, the revelation in Christ is oftentimes viewed as "superior" to the revelation of the Old Testament prophets in the sense that the latter is merely "verbal" while the former is "personal." Yet for the author of Hebrews, in spite of the finality of God's revelation in the "Son," no qualitative distinction is made between these revelations in terms of their truth value or in terms of their verbal form. Not only did the author of Hebrews identify the former revelation in the prophets with the Old

Testament Scriptures, but he also saw no difference of authenticity between the revelation in the prophets and in the Son. The superiority of the Son to the prophets has to do with four issues: (1) his identity-he is the eternal Son and shares the Father's divine essence; (2) his role-he accomplished God's redemptive plan; (3) his incarnation-he is God in human flesh, fitting him to accomplish his redemptive role; and (4) his ultimacy-his appearance inaugurated the eschatological era ("in these last days"), and he is exalted at God's right hand. Although Jesus is the very "image" and "speech" of the Father, the author of Hebrews used the phrase "word of God" to denote the propositional revelation about him. How can one escape the conclusion that in [Heb 2:3](#) and [12:25-29](#) (the first and last of the "warning passages") the essence of God's revelation is "verbal communication from God, conveyed through Christ and his apostles"? In [Heb 2:2-3](#), both the angel-mediated law and the Word in the Son require an identical demand for response. The only difference is in degree, not quality.

4. Jesus as God's Unique Revelation. What is it about this revelation in the Son, according to [Heb 1:1-2](#), that is contrasted with the revelation in the Old Testament, and for that matter the apostles as well, and that thus renders the revelation in the Son superior? The answer is, the Son's incarnation. As we saw above in our exegetical study of the passage, that which is contrasted is the "Son" kind of revelation with that of the prophets. What distinguishes the prophets from the Son? They spoke the word of God; the Son is the Word of God. The distinguishing feature is the incarnation that enabled the Son to make atonement for all, something the prophets and apostles could not do.

Orthodox theology has always affirmed that it is the particularity of Jesus in the incarnation that is revelatory of God. This point is well made by Richard Bauckham, who stated that the revelation of God through Christ is both "continuous with the Old Testament... and novel in the radical form which this particularization takes, namely, the incarnation." He also said that Jesus' incarnation is for the purpose of being "savingly present." There is, of course, a soteriological emphasis

in the prologue of Hebrews: the Son "makes purification for sins" before he is enthroned at the right hand of God. As stated earlier, there are exegetical reasons why the author gave marked prominence to this clause. It is this work of atonement that furnishes the doctrinal theme of the epistle worked out in the motif of high priest, and it is the incarnation that, although only hinted at in the prologue, is developed in chap. 2 and beyond and forms the foundation of the Christology elaborated throughout.

Bauckham made the perceptive observation that in the New Testament, the Christological use of the term "reveal" is mostly eschatological with reference to the *parousia*. It is only in the eschaton, when God's salvific plan is fully realized, that the Son's kingdom reign over all things will be finally achieved. Thus, Bauckham preferred the term "definitive" to "finality" in speaking of Jesus as God's revelation. It seems best when speaking of Jesus as God's revelation to understand the concept of finality in the sense of "ultimacy" and not that of "chronological lastness." In speaking of the continuity of revelation from the Old Testament to Christ and the apostles, "cumulative" is superior to "progressive" in that the latter term is used by those in the history of religions school to indicate an evolutionary development theologically. Others refer to Christ as "God's consummatory Word." These understandings are supported by the prologue in conjunction with what is said of the Son in [Hebrews 2](#). Although Christ is the heir of all things, he will inherit all things only after the incarnation and atonement, and only with total consummation in the eschaton. All things are not yet placed under his feet. Thus, with respect to [Heb 1:1-2](#), the Gospel narratives are the continuation as well as the climax of the Old Testament narratives.

Another crucial aspect of the Son's revelation of the Father in [Heb 1:1-2](#) is the statement that he is both the agent and sustainer of creation ([1:2-3](#)). If the Son is the mediator of creation, then he is not only the foundation for the knowledge of God; he is also the "basis of created rationality," the basis for the possibility of knowledge of any kind. Also,

by virtue of humanity's creation in the image of God, there is a moral kinship that renders it possible for humanity to receive God's revelation as well.

The upshot of all this is that God's "speech" in Jesus the Son is "something that God says, something that God does, and something that God is." Placing this in the order of [Heb 1:1-4](#), God's revelation in Christ is something that God says (God has spoken through the prophets and in a Son), something that Jesus as God is (the radiance of his glory and exact representation of his being), and something that Jesus as God does (he created the universe and he made purification for sins). Thus, God's revelation in Christ is being, word, and event. It incorporates all the categories that theologians have fought over relative to the nature of revelation: is it personal, propositional, or eventful? It is in reality all three. The incarnation of the *Logos* makes it personal. The speech of the *Logos*, including prophets (Old Testament) and apostles (New Testament), makes it propositional. The atonement provided by the *Logos* makes it eventful—in fact, the supreme event in history. There is thus a unity and continuity in God's revelation. As Warfield said in reference to [Heb 1:1-2](#): "In whatever diversity of forms, by means of whatever variety of modes, in whatever distinguishable stages it is given, it is ever the revelation of the One God, and it is ever the one consistently developing redemptive revelation of God."

The prologue of Hebrews also has a lot to say about Christology. [Hebrews 1:1-4](#) is one of the four great Christological mountain peaks of the New Testament; the others are [John 1:1-18](#); [Phil 2:5-11](#); [Col 1:13-20](#). Although Hebrews develops the theme of the high priesthood of Christ more than any New Testament book, its definitive Christological title is actually that of "Son," and its use in [Heb 1:2](#) establishes the theme Christologically for the entire epistle. It is only after the identity of Jesus as the Son of God, exalted above the angels and Moses, has been established that the writer goes on to demonstrate how this position qualified Jesus to be the high priest. As Son he intercedes ([4:14](#); [7:25](#); [9:24,28](#)), and as Son he discharges his priestly functions ([7:16](#); [9:14](#)).

The exposition of the high priestly work of Jesus is couched in the theological matrix of sonship.

In the Gospels, the term "Son" is used to express Jesus' relationship to God as his Father ([Matt 11:27](#); [Luke 10:22](#)). The Father himself addressed Jesus as his Son at the baptism and the transfiguration ([Mark 1:11](#); [9:7](#)), and the demons likewise addressed him as Son ([Matt 4:3,6](#); [Mark 3:11](#); [5:7](#)). Christ's preexistence is assumed in the New Testament passages that speak of God sending his Son ([John 3:17](#); [Rom 8:3](#); [Gal 4:4](#)). Although he did not use the term "Son" in [Phil 2:5-11](#), Paul did not believe that Jesus surrendered his divine nature at the incarnation, since he regarded Jesus as God's Son during his life and death. Fuller claimed that, in spite of its presence in the Synoptic Gospels, the title "Son of God" did not come into use until after the resurrection. In [Rom 1:4](#) Paul used the Greek term *horizō* to state that at his resurrection/exaltation Jesus "was declared" to be the Son of God. This belief seems to have arisen through the application of [Ps 2:7](#), which was already interpreted messianically at Qumran, to the risen Jesus ([Acts 13:33](#); cf. [Heb 5:5](#)).

Several matters call for discussion in this vein. First, in light of what is said about Jesus in the prologue of Hebrews, the question arises as to whether Hebrews expresses a *Logos* Christology. This is often debated, yet the book itself indicates that the only reason for not viewing the Christology of Hebrews in this way is the absence of the word *logos*. The Alexandrian language used to describe the Son in [Heb 1:3](#), whether or not borrowed from Philo, is certainly in many respects synonymous with *Logos*. Two of the titles in Philo are applied to Christ by the author of Hebrews later in the epistle: "firstborn" and "high priest." If [Heb 4:12-13](#) are interpreted to refer to Christ as the *Logos* of God, then the case is even stronger. Given all the factors, it would seem that Hebrews can be closely related to [John 1:1-18](#) as expressing a *Logos* Christology. It should be noted, however, that the degree of personification of the *Logos* as Jesus in [John 1](#) and derivatively in [Heb 1:1-4](#) exceeds anything in Hellenistic Judaism.

Second, the question of the relation of the prologue to wisdom Christology must be briefly explored. Commentators are quick to connect what is said of the Son as the one who made the universe ([Heb 1:2](#)) with personified wisdom as God's intermediary in creation ([Prov 8:22-36](#)) and the wisdom tradition. There are similarities. But Fee's caution that the New Testament writers did not identify personified wisdom with the preincarnate Christ is well taken. Nowhere in the tradition, he says, is it explicitly stated that wisdom is God's agent in creation. Rather, wisdom is personified as present in another sense, a literary sense, as the attribute inherent in God by which he ordained all things. In fact, [Prov 8:22-36](#) asserts only that wisdom was the first of God's creation, emphasizing her priority in time; thus, wisdom is pictured as present at creation, but not as the mediator of creation. The point of [Prov 8:22-36](#) is to show in a literary way through personification that creation reflects God's wise design. Fee concluded that there is no verbal or even conceptual link between what is stated in the wisdom tradition and what the New Testament writers explicitly said. The evidence indicates that the parallels between Hebrews and wisdom literature should not be used as proof of literary dependence, but neither should they rule out the possibility of allusion.

Third, [Heb 1:4](#) says that Jesus has inherited a name. Two questions arise: what is the name? and when did he inherit the name? The answer to the first question is given in the commentary above: the name must be "Son." The second question is not as easily answered. Did he inherit the name at creation ([1:2](#)), in his earthly life ([5:8](#)), or at his exaltation ([1:4-5](#))? The text implies that Jesus inherited the name after the atonement and exaltation, or at least after the atonement and in conjunction with the exaltation. But this does not lead to an adoptionistic Christology. According to the prologue, the name was not given to him in his preexistent state, but the inference that he was "Son" in his preexistent state seems unavoidable. This may be attested by the use of the perfect *keklēronomēken* instead of the aorist ([v. 4](#)) because Jesus did not first obtain the name at the time of exaltation, but had already obtained it as the preincarnate *Logos*. The use of [Ps 2:7](#) in the paragraph following the

prologue furnishes additional contextual evidence that Jesus was the Son in his preincarnate state. Additionally, if the author drew upon the wisdom tradition of [Proverbs 8](#), then by analogy Christ's sonship existed not only prior to the incarnation but prior to creation.

Both [Rom 1:4](#) and [Acts 13:33](#) seem to indicate that Paul (and Luke) regarded the resurrection as the time of his appointment to sonship. Most view it as occurring at the exaltation following the resurrection. This seems apparent from [Heb 1:3-4](#), which states that Christ "sat down at the right hand" of God and "became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited." The citation of [Ps 2:7](#) in this context makes clear that the name is that of "Son."

A problem develops in [Heb 5:8](#), which states that Christ was a "son" during his earthly life. But Schenck is correct that the context of [5:8](#) alludes to the appointment language of [1:5-6](#) in order to relate Christ's high priestly appointment to his enthronement as Son. There are, according to Schenck, three possible resolutions to the tension between [1:2](#) and [5:8](#) on sonship: (1) Christ was Son as a result of his exaltation; (2) the author used "Son" in two different senses: his eternal identity as Son and his incarnate role as Son in accomplishing redemption (and these are neither unrelated nor contradictory); (3) a real contradiction exists due to (a) the author's use of two different Christological traditions, or (b) the metaphorical nature of the language. Thus, the author made a distinction between Christ's identity as Son (which he has been eternally) and his role as Son (which he accomplished by incarnation, atonement, resurrection, and exaltation).

The author's explanation of the Son's redemptive work is in keeping with his understanding of the Son's eternal sonship. As Son, Christ discharges his priestly functions ([7:16](#); [9:14](#)), and as Son he intercedes ([4:14](#); [7:25](#); [9:24,28](#)). The author's fusion of the themes of "Son" and "high priest"-as well as their theological import-are evident in his careful placement of the two together in [4:14](#) and [7:28](#) ([4:14](#) begins the second major division of the epistle, and [7:28](#) closes a major division). Both the eternity and

perfection of the new covenant are guaranteed because Christ is the Son of God who is thus capable of being our effective high priest.

Yet there is a paradox in Hebrews regarding the Son's relation to the Father. The deity of Jesus is explicitly asserted in the prologue and elsewhere in the epistle. But the Son's dependence on the Father is also affirmed. In [1:2](#) the Father "appointed" the Son as heir; in [1:13](#) the Father exalts the Son; in [5:5](#) the Son is dependent on the Father for his calling as high priest; and in [13:20](#) the Father resurrected the Son. Mackintosh called this antinomy an indissociable [inseparable] duality for New Testament Christology.

It is also apparent that the author viewed Christ's sonship against the Old Testament backdrop of the messianic Son of David who is exalted to eternal dominion. The author's combination of [Ps 2:7](#) with [110:1](#) (see [Heb 1:5-14](#)) and the critical importance of these two Old Testament citations and their development in the theological sections of the epistle reveal the author's placement of Christ's sonship against this background.

As Son, Jesus is infinitely superior to the angels ([1:8](#)), Moses ([3:1-6](#); [10:29](#) by implication), and the Levitical priesthood ([7:28](#)). As Son, through the incarnation and atonement, he identified himself with us and wedded us to himself in such a way that we are "sons" because of what he accomplished. As the "source of eternal salvation" ([5:9](#)), he has been designated by God "high priest" forever, representing us to the Father eternally through his ongoing high priesthood. [Hebrews 7:28](#) states that "the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever." At the conclusion of the second major division of the epistle, the author returned to this dominant theme of exaltation that began in [1:1-4](#): "But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God" ([10:12](#)).

Christologically speaking, Hebrews affirms the importance of the ontological as well as the functional aspects of Christ's divine sonship. Soteriology is dependent upon Christology. Cullmann is thus incorrect

to claim that "it is only meaningful to speak of the Son in view of God's revelatory action, not in view of his being." This is an overstatement of the situation and underplays the importance of [Heb 1:3](#). The author of Hebrews based function on ontology. Likewise, J. Dunn believed that the author of Hebrews had no concept of preexistence ontologically. Not only is this assertion contradicted by what is stated in the prologue, but also by what is stated in the catena of seven Old Testament quotations that follow ([Heb 1:5-13](#)). There it becomes clear that the Son is the creator of all things and sits on the throne of God. Furthermore, God addressed the Son as both "God" and "Lord." The catena of quotations asserts the divine identity of Jesus the Son and hence his preexistence. It would be better to say, as did Henry, that throughout the New Testament, the title Son of God remains primarily a functional designation that emphasizes Jesus' obedience in the mission of divine revelation and redemption while also affirming his eternal Sonship.

The author of Hebrews divided the career of Jesus into three different stages: preexistence, incarnation (earthly period-"days of his flesh"), and exaltation. A clear demarcation separates the first from the second, but the latter two overlap. Thus the prologue and the thrust of the entire epistle declare that Jesus is the supreme revelation from God to man because he, as one who is by his character and nature God's Son, supremely combines in his person and work all three Old Testament categories of prophet, priest, and king. As the Son, he fulfills the prophets and serves as God's final word to man. As the Son, he functions as our priest, making the atoning sacrifice of himself for man. As the Son, he is the fulfillment of the Son of David messianic promises, the heir who reigns upon the throne eternally. Henry summed it up well:

The *preexistent* Christ was the revealing agent within the Godhead antecedently to creation; the *preincarnate* Christ was the revealing agent in the created universe, and also of the Old Testament redemptive disclosure; the *incarnate* Christ is the embodied revelation of God's essential glory and redemptive grace. All these functions,... the *risen and*

glorified Christ gathers into one, as the *glorified* Christ he will be the revealing agent in God's final judgment and consummation of all things.

Finally, a number of doctrinal and philosophical errors are refuted by [Heb 1:1-4](#). First, all theories that assert that the Son's preexistence is not personal, to quote Bernard Weiss, "go to wreck on [1:1-4](#)." Second, docetism is excluded by the prologue. Third, naturalism, the view that nature constitutes the whole of reality, is rejected. Concomitantly, both pantheism and panentheism are excluded since the world is a contingent reality created by God and not the actual body of God, and because God is not somehow "in" the created order as some animating spirit. Fourth, postmodern deconstruction with its negative view of language and meaning is refuted in that God's choice of words to reveal himself attaches meaning and value to human language. Fifth, postmodern relativism and pluralism, with their epistemological claim that truth is perspectival and socially constructed, lead to the conclusion that all religions are equally valid and at the same time equally invalid as a means of discovering ultimate truth with a capital "T." Hebrews rejects such a notion by affirming the superiority of God's revelation in Christ over Judaism and all other religions. God has spoken his final word in Jesus. Sixth, the notion that God's revelation is not verbal, but only personal, is refuted.

Christologically, the prologue affirms the unique preexistence of Christ, his incarnation as fully God and fully man. In essence, Jesus as the God-Man is the only one who could procure salvation through his blood atonement. [Hebrews 1:1-4](#) refutes modalistic monarchianism, the heresy that identifies the Father, Son, and Spirit as successive revelations of the same person and denies that the Godhead consists of three Persons who have one essence or nature. The prologue also refutes dynamic monarchianism, which claims that Jesus achieved deity only after the resurrection. Finally, it refutes all attempts to establish Christology "from below," such as the infamous "Jesus Seminar," which interprets Jesus as merely an "example"-one who illustrated for man what God is

like; or to see Jesus as the one who actualized a divine-human union and revealed this possibility to all people.

Lastly, the schism between Judaism and Christianity so often reflected in the New Testament documents rises from a conflict over the divine sonship of Jesus. This is the focal point of contention between Judaism and Christianity. Bauckham proposed that the Jewish monotheistic understanding of God in the period of the Second Temple involved God's identity (i.e., who God is) rather than in terms of the divine nature (i.e., what divinity is). Early Christianity, conscious of the Old Testament theological framework for the identity of God, understood Jesus to be included in the unique identity of the one God of Israel—a Christological monotheism, so to speak. [Psalm 110:1](#), as used by the author of Hebrews and other New Testament writers, underscores this. Jesus has been a part of the Godhead eternally and thus, as distinguished from the creation, Jesus is the agent of God's creative activity. Thus, an adoptionist Christology that would lead to any form of ditheism is avoided. Bauckham also explained why [Hebrews 1](#) is fundamental in illustrating the extent to which early Christology was an exegetical enterprise in the way the author skillfully wove together the catena of seven Old Testament quotations, using current methods of Jewish exegesis, which were then pressed into the service of Christological monotheism. Like all the New Testament writers, the author of Hebrews operated from a Christology that identified Jesus in the "unique identity" of God. The argument, common in the "History of Religions School," that such a Christology could not have originated within the context of Judaism—and is rather the result of a transition in Christian theology from Jewish thought to Hellenistic philosophy in the second, third, and fourth centuries—is the opposite of the truth (as Bauckham noted). Greek philosophy, with its Platonic categories, actually made it more difficult to ascribe full deity to Jesus. "Nicene theology was essentially an attempt to resist the implications of Greek philosophical understandings of divinity and to re-appropriate in a new conceptual context the New Testament's inclusion of Jesus in the unique divine identity."

The author of Hebrews, using the Old Testament, showed why the Old Testament itself points beyond Judaism to its ultimate fulfillment in Christ the Word incarnate. The recipients of Hebrews, likely Jewish Christians, would have benefited greatly from the theological sections that develop the theme of sonship and high priesthood and that serve as the grounds for the exhortations and warnings that convey the purpose of the epistle.

New American Commentary - The New American Commentary –
Volume 35: Hebrews.

“Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in... aim at earth and you will get neither.” – C.S. Lewis

Jesus is a better Revelation!

Jesus is better than, or... better stated, Jesus is the fulfillment of ALL OT pointers/procedures/promises...

The prophets came to in-form... and Jesus came to trans-form! – Allister Begg

Terry McCuchim – “You know, if something’s going to get clean, something else has to get dirty.”

See Ephesians 5:1... we are to imitate God as children...

- We imitate God by imitating Christ
- Christ is our Prophet, Priest, & King (classic Calvin)
 - We are Christ-like prophets when we... (truth)
 - We are Christ-like priests when we... (love)
 - We are Christ-like kings when we... (lead)

It is significant that the author of Hebrews connects the doctrines of redemption and creation. This is because the God who creates is the God who redeems. As followers of Jesus Christ, we must recognize that if we do not have the right doctrine of creation, we will not have the right doctrine of redemption. Creation and the gospel are inextricably linked.

Verse 3 is an exposition of how the Son reveals the Father to us. The idea of “radiance” goes back to the notion of the *shekinah* glory in the Old Testament. The *shekinah* was a shining, visible glory that demonstrated the majesty of God, as in the exodus ([Exod 13:21; 40:34-35](#)) and at the dedication of Solomon’s temple ([1 Kgs 8:10-11](#)). Looking at Christ is the way we see most fully the glory of God. More than that, Christ is the exact expression of the Father’s nature. Christ shares the divine nature with the Father as the Second Person of the Trinity.

A Trinitarian Christology is of vital importance to the health of the church. The author of Hebrews is clear: we only understand Christ rightly when we see him in a redemptive-historical context as the climax of God’s revelation, and in a theological context as the Second Person of the Trinity.

As this important divine figure, the Son is not only the active agent of creation, but he is also active in the preservation of creation. He sustains “all things by his powerful word.” If the Son ever ceased to will the universe to remain, then the universe would cease to exist. The power to create is also the power to preserve, the power to control, and the power to bring to an end. Hebrews tells us the Son possesses this kind of power.

The transition to “purification for sins” happens rather suddenly. Yet we must see in this how tightly the Bible intertwines the person and work of Christ. **The word *purification* is not one we typically use to summarize the gospel. This word encapsulates the priestly work of Christ and recalls the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. The rest of Hebrews, particularly [Hebrews 9–10](#), will further expound on the significance of purification.** The author introduces the term here in order to prepare readers for the trajectory of the rest of his argument.

The final statement highlights the kingly authority of Christ. To be at someone’s “right hand” is to be in a place of favor and authority. For Christ to be at the right hand of the heavenly “Majesty” means he is above all powers and he rules over the cosmos. **The place of Christ in heaven at God’s right hand also alludes to his work of intercession for us ([Rom 8:34](#)).**

In short, [the first three verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews are some of the most remarkable in all of Scripture. Consider the doctrines embedded in them:](#)

- Revelation
- Creation
- The Trinity
- The Relationship of the Old and New Testaments
- Christology
- Atonement

Even more, **consider the wonderfully high Christology that the author has presented in just a few words. Christ is the . . .**

- Son of God
- Revelation of God
- Fulfillment of God's Revelation in the Old Testament
- Heir of All Things
- Agent of Creation
- Radiance of God's Glory
- Expression of God's Nature
- Preserver of All Creation
- Purifier of God's People
- Mediator for God's People

Hebrews is not for the theologically faint of heart.

Hebrews is for those whose endurance will be richly rewarded with a remarkable portrait of Christ. Let us treasure him, our Creator and Redeemer. He is worthy, for he is supreme over all things.

Christ-Centered Exposition - Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary – Exalting Jesus in Hebrews.

GLORY The weighty importance and shining majesty which accompany God's presence. The basic meaning of the Hebrew word kabod is heavy in weight. (Compare [1 Sam. 4:18](#); [Prov. 27:3](#).) Thus it can refer to a heavy burden ([Ex. 18:18](#); [Ps. 38:4](#); compare more idiomatic uses in [Gen. 12:10](#); [47:4](#); [Ex. 4:10](#); [7:14](#)). On the other side, it can describe extreme good fortune or mass numbers, a use with many different English translations (compare [Gen. 13:2](#); [Ex. 12:38](#); [Num. 20:20](#); [1 Kings 10:2](#)).

The verb thus often comes to mean, "give weight to, honor" ([Ex. 20:12](#); [1 Sam. 15:30](#); [Ps. 15:4](#); [Prov. 4:8](#); [Isa. 3:5](#)). Such honor which people give to one another is a recognition of the place of the honored person in the human community. A nation can have such honor or glory ([Isa. 16:14](#); [17:3](#)). This is not so much something someone bestows on another as a quality of importance which a person, group, or nation has and which another recognizes. "To give glory" is to praise, to recognize the importance of another, the weight the other carries in the community. In the Psalms people give such glory to God, that is they recognize the essential nature of His Godness that gives Him importance and weight in relationship to the human worshiping community. (Compare [Pss. 22:23](#); [86:12](#); [Isa. 24:15](#).) Human praise to God can be false, not truly recognizing His importance ([Isa. 29:13](#); compare [1 Sam. 2:30](#)). At times God creates glory for Himself ([Ex. 14:4](#), [17](#); [Ezek. 28:22](#)). As one confesses guilt and accepts rightful punishment, one is called upon to recognize the righteousness and justice of God and give Him glory ([Josh. 7:19](#); [1 Sam. 6:5](#)). God thus reveals His glory in His just dealings with humans. He also reveals it in the storms and events of nature ([Ps. 29](#); compare [Isa. 6](#)). Glory is thus that side of God which humans recognize and to which humans respond in confession, worship, and praise. (Compare [Isa. 58:8](#); [60:1](#).) Still, for the Old Testament, the greatest revelation of divine glory came on Sinai ([Deut. 5:24](#)). Yet such experiences are awesome and fearful ([Deut. 5:25](#)). Such revelation does not, however, reveal all of God, for no person can see the entirety of the divine glory, not even Moses ([Ex. 33:17-23](#)).

The New Testament uses *doxa* to express glory and limits the meaning to God's glory. In classical Greek *doxa* means opinion, conjecture, expectation, and then praise. New Testament carries forward the Old Testament meaning of divine power and majesty ([Acts 7:2](#); [Eph. 1:17](#); [2 Pet. 1:17](#)). The New Testament extends this to Christ as having divine glory ([Luke 9:32](#); [John 1:14](#); [1 Cor. 2:8](#); [2 Thess. 2:14](#)).

Divine glory means that humans do not seek glory for themselves ([Matt. 6:2](#); [John 5:44](#); [1 Thess. 2:6](#)). They only look to receive praise and honor from Christ ([Rom. 2:7](#); [5:2](#); [1 Thess. 2:19](#); [Phil. 2:16](#)).

Holman Bible Dictionary.

WHAT, THEN, ARE the vehicles on which the meaning of this beautiful passage can be brought to our context today? In the process of bridging the contexts between the author's message and contemporary culture we are confronted with a number of challenging dynamics. The passage is complex in the original language since the author presents us with one extended sentence in these four verses. How, then, are we to understand the organization of his ideas? Which ideas are focal for the author? What is he trying to accomplish through the introduction?

These questions raise a second important issue. In [1:1-4](#) we find no fewer than ten weighty topics, which span from heaven to earth and from eternity past to eternity future. The list of themes reads like part of the table of contents in a systematic theology textbook! How can we focus our application when we are confronted with so much substance in such a short space?

Finally, terminology used of the Son in this introduction, such as "radiance," "representation," and "having become superior," is somewhat vague and carefully nuanced. It is, therefore, open to theological abuse by those who would do a surface reading without further probing the significance of the author's language. How can we discern what the author is trying to say about Christ?

When presented with a complex passage, one finds help in returning to basic principles of interpretation. These provide stability and direction in sorting through the complexities confronting us. In "Bridging Contexts," therefore, we need to consider how genre (i.e., the kind of literature with which we are dealing) impacts our understanding, and therefore our application, of the text. The grammatical structure of the text offers further assistance. Moreover, certain terminological and theological clarification may be found by considering the broader context of the book of Hebrews itself.

So the opening statement in Hebrews introduces us to the heart of the book as a whole: God has something to say to the church, and that message focuses preeminently in the person and work of the exalted Son.

At the same time, these must not be elevated to first place among the author's concerns. For example, an outline of the book built around the "better than" motif, although communicating an important aspect of Hebrews, may obscure the author's primary concern of God's communication to the church through the Son. Even to focus on the purification of sin, one of the most important themes of Hebrews, as the central theme is misguided and misses the bigger picture. Therefore, in seeking to apply 1:1-4 we must focus on the heart of this passage and consider how we might apply these supporting themes at the points the author himself highlights in subsections of the sermon.

The author does not use his ability with stylistic flair to impress but to rivet the hearers' attention and center it on God's act of communication, especially heard in the person, works, and status of the Son. He accomplishes this objective by presenting a theological framework he shares with other early Christian writers. This framework presents Christ in his preexistence, incarnation, and exaltation. Here the author presents this theology in a chiasmic structure (one built around distant parallels):

A God has appointed Christ as heir *enthronement*
 B Through him he created the *cosmic action*
 world
 C He is the radiance of God's *relation to God*
 glory
 C' He bears God's stamp *relation to God*
 B' He governs the universe *cosmic action*
 (having made purification for sins) (*incarnation*)
A' He sat down at God's right hand *enthronement*

As we attempt to apply Hebrews 1:1-4 to the contemporary church, we must come to grips with the Christology of early Christian doctrine as well as how to respond to that Christology and those who challenge it. The author's crafting of this text challenges us to consider how theology might be communicated artistically and effectively to those in need of hearing "the Word of God through the Son" today.

As we have already suggested, the second movement of 1:1-4 highlights seven affirmations concerning the Son (1:2b-4). The first two—that the Son has been appointed heir and was the agent of creation—are expressed in relative clauses introduced by "whom" and "through whom" (*hon* and *di' hou* respectively). At the heart of the third relative clause (introduced by *hos*) is the proclamation that the Son has sat down at the right hand of God, and the rest of the affirmations are

subordinate to this clause, supporting the idea of the Son's exaltation (lit. trans. follows).

Son

** whom he appointed heir of all things*

v. 2b

and

** through whom he made the universe*

** who...*

being the radiance of God's glory

and

v. 3

*the exact representation of his being
sustaining all things by his powerful word*

having provided purification for sins

...sat down at the right hand of the Majesty

v. 4 ** having become as much superior to the angels...*

Thus, the grammatical structure of the passage highlights what we have already suggested as a key theme governing the entire discourse: the exaltation of the Son to the right hand of God. [

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The – Hebrews: From biblical text...to contemporary life.

Summary of "Bridging Contexts." In our attempt to think through principles by which the message of [Hebrews 1:1-4](#) might be applied accurately today, two central truths in this passage have risen to the surface. (1) The introduction to Hebrews boldly and artistically states that God is a communicator who has spoken to the church. This communication has progressed beyond, but has continuity with, the older covenant revelation in that God is still the one speaking and the

Old Testament bears witness to the new era. (2) God has communicated ultimately in the person of his Son. This Son is proclaimed as one with, but distinct from, God the Father, having a nature, activity, and position that identify him with God. The person and work of the Son is brought to climax and focus in his exaltation to God's right hand, a position of ultimate authority and honor in the universe.

Contemporary Significance

THEOLOGY AS THE foundation for Christian practice. Some branches of the church have always placed great emphasis on practical, experiential Christianity. In recent decades groups such as the Navigators and Campus Crusade for Christ rightly have stressed "discipleship" and the need for application in the daily life of the believer. Since the early 1970s many mainline churches have joined this emphasis, teaching classes on such topics as "How to Have a Quiet Time," "Scripture Memory," "Marriage and the Family," and "Sharing Christ in the Marketplace." Too many of these groups, with nonmainline churches as well, have dropped offering "Basic Christian Doctrine" classes altogether. We want to know how Christianity affects our lives today and how it can help us make it though tomorrow.

In their devotional times, many Christians find themselves returning again and again to the "practical" sections of Scripture, like the book of James or those sections of Paul's writings in which he deals with "real life" issues, such as marriage or money. This material can be applied readily to the nitty-gritty issues of living in contemporary culture. On the shelves of any Christian bookstore, one finds hundreds of Christian self-help books on a plethora of topics and only a handful dealing with theological issues.

At times we drift dangerously close to the backwaters of our culture's pragmatism, going so far as to judge sermons on the basis of whether we were offered anything practical or relevant. If the truth taught in a Bible

study, devotional time, or sermon does not have immediate implications, we do not embrace it. With our society we glorify "doers" above "thinkers." Thus, the rock star or the football hero who may be immature and shallow theologically is elevated as a star witness to Christianity.

Warm-hearted, devotional, application-oriented Christianity should be encouraged. The Scriptures were written to change, mold, and direct the lives of God's people. Yet grave danger lies in focusing on the so-called "practical" teachings of Christianity *to the neglect of the "theological."* Theology and practice are both vitally important aspects of following Christ. Notice that in his introduction to the book, the author of Hebrews lays a foundation for his entire sermon with basic Christian doctrine. He uses dogma as a precursor to praxis.

At the same time, the author hints of his practical concerns by reminding his audience that the word of God is "to us," a foreshadowing of his hortatory sections. He later follows with such exhortations as "encourage one another" ([3:13](#); [10:25](#)), "lay aside sin" ([12:1-2](#)), and get busy with relationships and right attitudes (e.g., [13:1-6](#)). Therefore, the introduction to Hebrews challenges us at the point of seeing the powerful life and ministry tool offered in sound theology. Right theology lays an important foundation for a Christian life robustly lived. A neglect of theology, on the other hand, has detrimental effects on the church and individual Christian lives. In the mid-part of this century Dorothy Sayers wrote:

Official Christianity, of late years, has been having what is known as bad press. We are constantly assured that the churches are empty because preachers insist too much upon doctrine—dull dogma as people call it. The fact is the precise opposite. It is the neglect of dogma that makes for dullness. The Christian faith is the most exciting drama that ever staggered the imagination of man—and the dogma is the drama...

Christ, in His divine innocence, said to the woman of Samaria, "Ye worship ye know not what"—being apparently under the impression that it might be desirable, on the whole, to know what one was worshipping. He thus showed himself sadly out of touch with the twentieth-century mind, for the cry today is: "Away with the tedious complexities of dogma—let us have the simple spirit of worship; just worship, no matter of what!" The only drawback to this demand for a generalized and undirected worship is the practical difficulty of arousing any sort of enthusiasm for the worship of nothing in particular.

Those who neglect theology may live a shallow, insipid form of Christianity that, in the end, neither affects life nor endures the test of time.

Hebrews' insistence on right thinking as essential for right living. Thus the task of theology is to keep us "on track" in the Christian life. The author of Hebrews presents it as foundational to perseverance in that life. Theology "is an act of repentant humility," wrote Karl Barth, in which "the Church seeks again and again to examine itself critically... It has to be a watchman so as to carefully observe that constant threatening and invasive error to which the life of the Church is in danger, because it is composed of fallible, erring, sinful people."

Biblical preaching. The topic of divine communication in the introduction of Hebrews also focuses attention on the issue of preaching—that is, preaching skillfully executed. The presupposition most basic to the activity of preaching is "God has spoken," for ultimately it is the word of God, not our words, that has the power to

change peoples' lives. The author of Hebrews displays a conviction concerning the importance of preaching; for it is through this "word of exhortation" we call Hebrews that he asserts God's climactic word through his Son.

Yet in some circles today, preaching is being challenged as an outdated mode of communication, and this challenge must be answered. Speaking of the importance of preaching to Christianity, John Stott writes:

Preaching is indispensable to Christianity. Without preaching a necessary part of its authenticity has been lost. For Christianity is, in its very essence, a religion of the Word of God. No attempt to understand Christianity can succeed which overlooks or denies the truth that the living God has taken the initiative to reveal himself savingly to fallen humanity; or that his self-revelation has been given by the most straightforward means of communication known to us, namely by a word and words; or that he calls upon those who have heard his Word to speak it to others

G. Campbell Morgan suggested that when the church ceases to lift Christ to the height where all people can see him, it becomes useless and a fraud

It is only the exalted Jesus who can make purification of sins, according to Hebrews ([1:3](#); [8:1-2](#); [9:1-10:18](#)), and provide us a way to draw near to God ([4:14-16](#); [10:19-25](#)). It is only the exalted Jesus who can offer help to us in our time of need ([4:15-16](#)), deliver us from death ([2:14-15](#)), and lead us to glory ([2:10](#); [12:22-24](#)). In short, it is only the exalted Jesus who is fit for our worship and attention and who can help us persevere in the Christian life.

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Zoom In, Zoom Out

by [Rosabeth Moss Kanter](#)

Abstract

Zoom buttons on digital devices let us examine images from many viewpoints. They also provide an apt metaphor for modes of strategic thinking. Some people prefer to see things up close, others from afar. Both perspectives have virtues. But they should not be fixed positions, says Harvard Business School's Kanter. **To get a complete picture, leaders need to zoom in and zoom out. A close-in perspective** is often found in relationship-intensive settings. It **brings details into sharp focus and makes opportunities look large and compelling. But it can have significant downsides.** Leaders who prefer to zoom in tend to create policies and systems that depend too much on politics and favors. They can focus too closely on personal status and on turf protection. And **they often miss the big picture. When leaders zoom out, they can see events in context and as examples of general trends. They are able to make decisions based on principles. Yet a far-out perspective also has traps.** Leaders can be so high above the fray that they don't recognize emerging threats. Having zoomed out to examine all possible routes, they may fail to notice when the moment is right

for action on one path. They may also seem too remote and aloof to their staffs. **The best leaders can zoom in to examine problems and then zoom out to look for patterns and causes.** They don't divide the world into extremes-idiosyncratic or structural, situational or strategic, emotional or contextual. **The point is not to choose one over the other but to learn to move across a continuum of perspectives.**

The Writer's Thesis

The first sentence of the Hebrews sermon is an opening salvo. **The author immediately begins to set Jesus Christ high above everything and everyone that people might otherwise trust for salvation and security. He does not say, however, that Jesus' message is any different from that of the prophets. The content of the message is never contrasted, as will become apparent with a close reading of the letter.** But the dignity and authority of Jesus Christ is far greater than any other because He is no less than the Son of God, the heir of all things, and the Creator of heaven and earth (1:2). And the salvation He has accomplished brings to fulfillment all that came before.

The phrase "last days" (1:2) has its background in the Old Testament, referring to the time when God would bring about the restoration of fallen creation. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus represent the climax of God's plan of salvation, beginning the period of the "last days." At the same time, the writer of Hebrews continues to turn his readers' eyes to the future as he writes about the eventual consummation of their salvation.

The full deity of Jesus Christ is made evident in that He is the Creator of all things, His nature is the same as that of God the Father, and He does what only God can do ([1:2-3](#)).

After completing His great work of redemption, He is again in heaven at the place of highest honor and authority—God’s right hand (alluding to [Psalm 110:1-2](#)). The observation that Christ sat down indicates that His work of offering the sacrifice is finished. That point will be reemphasized in [10:12-14](#), and the reasoning behind this emphasis is that any view of life, **any system of salvation, and any approach to God that does not center around Jesus Christ is obviously false and stands self-condemned.**

Demystifying Hebrews

“Majesty in heaven” ([1:3](#); [8:1](#) NIV) is a typical Jewish *periphrasis* for God. In order not to break the third commandment of misusing the name of God, even unintentionally, the Jews began to use other terms to avoid speaking it at all. Some people became almost superstitious about pronouncing God’s name.

Layman's Bible Commentary - Layman's Bible Commentary – Volume 12: Hebrews thru Revelation.

I. PROLOGUE ([1:1-4](#))

In a majestically constructed opening paragraph, the writer introduced his readers at once to the surpassing greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Son, he declared, is the par excellence vehicle for divine revelation. In asserting this, he implicitly contrasted Him with the prophets of old and explicitly contrasted Him with the angels.

1:1-2a. The central assertion of the Prologue is made here. Though **God** has variously (*polymerōs kai polytropōs*, lit., "by various means and **in various ways**") revealed Himself **in the past**, Old Testament prophetic revelation has now received its end-times climax through God's **Son**. However highly the readership regarded that former revelation, the writer implied they must now listen most closely to the Son.

1:2b-4. In a series of subordinate constructions which are part of a single sentence in the Greek, the author set forth the Son's greatness. The unified structure of the writer's sentence is hidden by the NIV which breaks it down into several sentences. To begin with (**v. 2b**), the Son is the designated **Heir of all things**. This is obviously as it should be since He is also their Maker—the One **through whom He made the universe** (*tous aiōnas*, lit., "the ages," also rendered "the universe" in **11:3**). The reference to the Son's heirship anticipates the thought of His future reign, of which the writer will say much.

But the One who is both Creator and Heir is also a perfect reflection of the God who has spoken in Him. Moreover **His Word** is so **powerful** that all He has made is sustained by that Word. And it is this Person who has **provided purification for sins** and taken His seat **at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven** (cf. **8:1**; **10:12**; **12:2**). In doing so it is obvious He has attained an eminence far beyond anything **the angels** can claim.

As might easily be expected in the Prologue, the writer struck notes which will be crucial to the unfolding of his argument in the body of the epistle. He implied that God's revelation in the Son has a definitive quality which previous revelation lacked. Moreover the sacrifice for sins which such a One makes must necessarily be greater than other kinds of sacrifices. Finally the Son's greatness makes preoccupation with angelic dignities entirely unnecessary. **Though the Prologue contains no warning—the writer reserved those for later—it carries with it an implicit admonition: This is God's supremely great Son; hear Him!** (cf. **12:25-27**)

The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by
Dallas Seminary Faculty.