

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST (Heb. 1:1-3)

In our study last Sunday morning we introduced the opening verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews under three titles, - preparation, presentation, and pre-eminence. We briefly mentioned how the writer wrote about the *preparation* for Jesus in the Old Testament, **Heb. 1:1** God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets ... He then moved from the *preparation* for Christ in the Old Testament to the *presentation* of Christ in the New Testament, **2** Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son ... and then the writer to the Hebrews presents the *pre-eminence* of Christ, **2** ... whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; **3** Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power ... We concentrated on that first description, - whom he hath appointed heir of all things, - and how it illustrates Christ is the heir to His Kingdom which He will receive as His inheritance, **Hab. 2:14** For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD. ... This was also the chorus of the Redeemed in Heaven, **Rev. 5:9** And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy ... for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood ... **10** And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and *we shall reign on the earth.*

So, Christ is pre-eminent. The writer to the Hebrews also declares He is the Creator, **Heb. 1:2** by [διὰ, through] whom [Christ] also he [God] made the worlds. ... What can you say to that? ... The Word of God says Christ is the agent through which God created the worlds. In his Gospel, John wrote, **Jn. 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** The same was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. How clear is that?! For example, can a Christian truthfully give credence to an evolutionary *theory*?! To do so would mean they have to dissent from the clear teaching of God's Word which clearly and unambiguously declares Him to be the Creator! ... Disagreeing with God's Word is disagreeing with God and no Christian should put themselves in that position. ... To be able to create belongs to God alone, and Jesus is God. ... He created the world perfectly. Humanity polluted it, but God will restore it.

But there is more to this statement, **Heb. 1:2** by whom also he made the worlds. ... The familiar Greek word for world is κόσμος, which refers to the world *materially*. It is the word relating to this earth and the physical creation. However, another word is used here, αἰών, and it refers to an *age*, or *the ages* ... Christ not only created the physical earth, but He also created time and space and all the boundaries of existence, as Paul explained to the Colossians, **Col. 1:16** for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth. ... He is the

Creator ... How can a Christian argue against that?! ... Either God is the Creator, as His Word says ... or His Word is untrue and deceitful! ... If *one* part of His Word is untrue, it jeopardises the veracity of *every* part. The opening words of Scripture declare, **Gen. 1:1** *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth* ... and it cannot be any clearer than that!

Thus far, the writer has presented Christ as pre-eminent in being appointed the heir of all things, and also the Creator (by whom also he made the worlds). The third means by which he presents Christ as excellent is through His brightness, **3** *Who being the brightness of his glory*. ... Jesus Christ is the perfect reflection of the majesty of God.

This *brightness* corresponds with Moses' experience. For example, on Mount Sinai he requested of the Lord, **Ex. 33:18** *I beseech thee, shew me thy glory [kabowd, honour, splendour]. And the Lord replied, **19** I will make all my goodness [LXX, δόξα] pass before thee, and I will proclaim [call out, announce] the name of the LORD before thee ... **20** ... Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. **21** And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: **22** And it shall come to pass, while my glory [kabowd] passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: **23** And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts [from behind]: but my face shall not be seen ... Such is the magnificence of the glory of God!*

And that is also how John saw His glory in the Book of Revelation, , **Rev. 4:2** *And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. **3** And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. Moses and the elders of Israel saw it too, **Ex. 24:9** Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: **10** And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness ... And Ezekiel, **Ezek. 1:26** And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. **27** And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. **28** As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. ... And Daniel, **Dan. 7:9** I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. **10** A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him:*

thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. ... The majesty of God, ³ Who being the *brightness* of his glory ... so bright, - impossible to look upon Him, - and yet in the Person of the Lord Jesus, He was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (Jn. 1:14).

In the new heaven and the new earth there will be neither sun nor moon, **Rev. 21:23** for the glory [*δόξα, magnificence, excellence, honour, splendour, brightness, pre-eminence*] of God did lighten [*φωτίζω, give light, illuminate*] it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. ... Look back to the creation, **Gen. 1:3** God said, Let there be light: and there was light. ⁴ And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. ⁵ And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. ... There was nothing imperfect about the darkness for since God made it, it was as perfect as the light.

... On the second day God divided the waters from the heavens. On the third day He formed the dry land and separated it from the waters. ... It wasn't until the fourth day He said, **Gen. 1:14** Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: ¹⁵ And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. ¹⁶ And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. ¹⁷ And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth ... Before the sun and the moon were created, God had already created light (cf. v.3) ... and the light was a representation of His glory, as Malachi referred to, the **Mal. 4:2** the Sun of righteousness ... the same glory James spoke about, **James 1:17** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from *the Father of lights*, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. ... This was the James who along with Peter and John saw Jesus on the Mountain of Transfiguration being *transfigured* before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light (Mt. 17:2). ...

Jesus Christ is the brightness of God's glory, and that is how He could say, **Jn. 8:12** I am the light of the world. And He told His disciples that same brightness of God's glory shines through His people, **Mt. 5:14** Ye are the light of the world. ... ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

The fourth means by which the writer to the Hebrews demonstrates the excellency of Christ is through ³ the express image of his person. This is the nature of the Lord Jesus. This is His being, *Who* He is. Christology is the study of Christ, and Christianity is all about Him. He is at its centre ... And that is why

it is essential the Jesus you believe in is the Jesus of the Bible for when you are looking at Jesus, you are looking at God, **Col. 1:19** For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. ... He is God! He is nothing less. He is fully God in essence and in nature.

And because He is the express image of God in essence and in nature, in the brightness of His glory, Who made the worlds, and Who has been appointed heir of all things ... He is **Heb. 1:3** upholding all things by the word of his power. ... *Do you believe that?!* ... Since Jesus is upholding all things by the word [*not λόγος, but ῥῆμα, that which He has uttered*] of his power [*δύναμις*], He not only made all things, and He not only will inherit all things, but He is *holding* all things altogether under His control. As the psalmist declares, “He’s got the whole world in His hands”, **Ps. 95:4** In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. Isaiah asked, **Is. 40:12** Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? ... **15** Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.

Could you imagine what would happen if God was *not* in control? How would it be if He decided to leave this world to its own devices? ... We would cease to exist! There would be nothing left for destruction would prevail. Humanity would destroy everything! ... If God was not in control, there would not be any earth ... but He is keeping it because it belongs to Him, **Ps. 24:1** The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. **2** For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. ... And because it is His, He is jealous concerning it and He has planned to restore it to what it was before sin ruined it. The whole universe, - and all creation, even those uttermost parts they haven't discovered yet, - ... here is what Amos said, **Amos 5:6** Seek the LORD ... **8** Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name.

That is the power God has! Despite all the human corruption, this creation belongs to the Lord, and He is keeping it. There *will* come a time, however, when it no longer will be ... but for now, *God* is upholding all things by the word of his power ... What *will* happen when the time comes for this world to end? Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter tells us, **II Peter 3:10** the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. ... That is what God is going to do.

It is not the end of the story though for He has something greater in His mind. ... He sent His Son to die on the cross to take upon Himself the sins of His people so that when this world is over and finished with, - this present *first* heaven and the first earth, - He will replace it with a *new* heaven and a *new earth*. John wrote, **Rev. 21:1** And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. **2** And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. **3** And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. **4** And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. **5** And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.

Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, **Acts 2:29** Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. **30** Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, *he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne*. ... That is *the pre-eminence of Christ!* That's how God's plan will be completed, through our Saviour, **Heb. 1:1** God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, **2** Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; **3** Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power ... We have looked at five aspects of the pre-eminence of Christ presented by the writer to the Hebrews ... there are two more we shall continue in our next study. Amen.