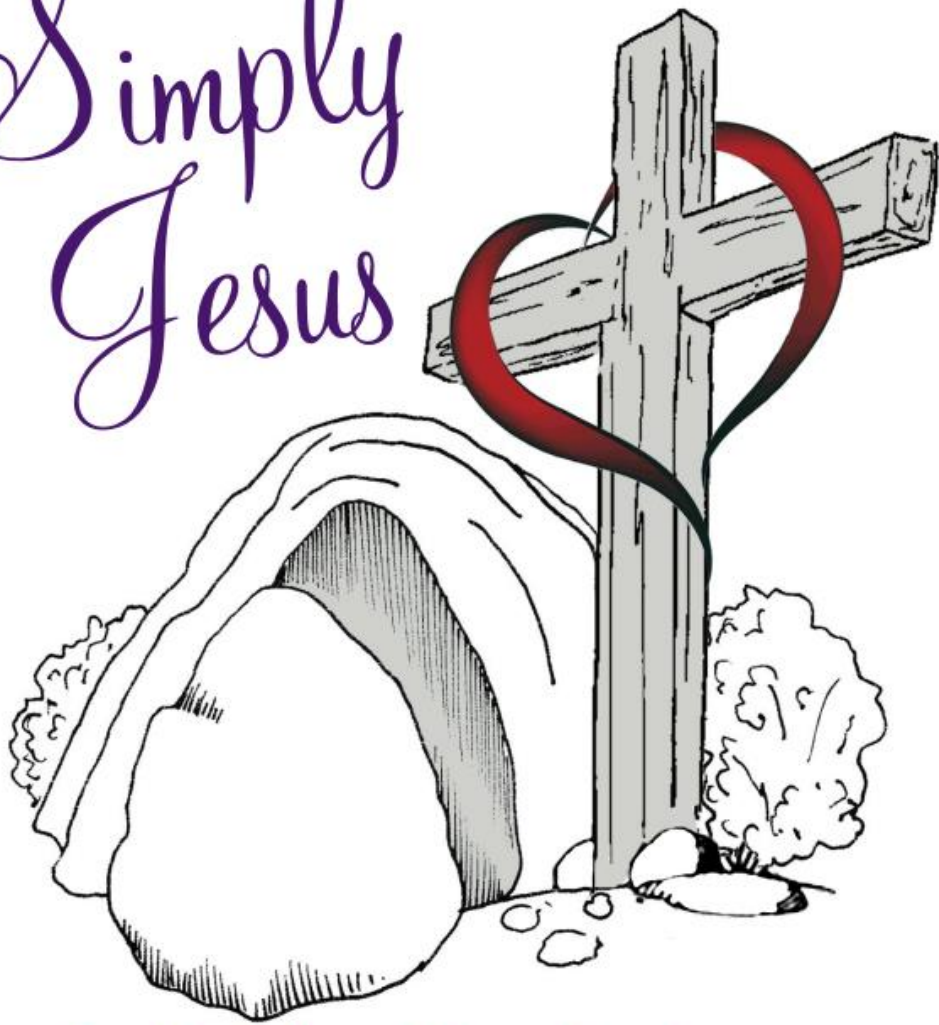

Simply
Jesus



But Not a Simple Jesus

Paul R. McCuiston

Teaching **4** Jesus
MINISTRIES

Radiance of God



**God has spoken to us in
His Son, whom He
appointed heir of all things**

Hebrews 1:2

The Radiance of God
Hebrews 1:1-13

“When EF Hutton talks, people listen!” Do you recall this vintage commercial? This theme was one in a series developed back in the 80’s to help rebrand a company that had been embarrassed by a scandal. In this seminar, we’ve been on a mission to *rebrand* Jesus, enlarging our image of him from that of *just a savior* who gets us to heaven to Lord and Master! Once again, the passage before us sets us up for an audience with the great King. We are here to learn more about his nature. As with John, we will start with the idea of *words*. This time, God will be speaking:

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son (1:1-2a).

The language here is forceful. When the writer wrote that God spoke, he is not talking about a casual conversation like he had with Adam in the Garden. Rather, it was like the conversation God had with Abraham in the heat of the day when he *revealed* the news that Sarah would have a baby! Did you notice that I italicized the word *revealed*? Italics are used for emphasis. I want you to realize that when the Lord told Abraham about the covenant, it was a divine revelation. The God of the universe was pleased with Abraham and opened his will to him. The opening verse of our text broadens the idea of revelation. This verse shows that God was using the prophets to share his intentions with them (his will). Sometimes, God would share such ideas as “I will also make you a light of the nations, so that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6). This revelation was one of many. *“Many” is the same as portions in the first verse.* Not only did revelations come at various times, but they also came in many ways. You need to look no farther than the prophets who did some crazy things to get their message across. Here is a strange example. Ezekiel had to lay on his left side for 390 days, on his right for forty days, and then turn toward Jerusalem with a “barred arm” (Ezekiel 4:1-7). What did these actions have to do with the prophecy? Nothing? They were to get the attention of the audience. Here’s another good one. Hosea named his children “Unloved” and “Not-My-People” (Hosea 1). How would you like to live your life with the name “Unloved?” Even Johnny Cash’s “Sue” would be better than that!

Continuing from the Old Testament prophets, the writer then takes his readers to the very throne room of heaven. In one short paragraph, just seventy-two words (in the Greek), the reader is taken from the sands of Israel to the “right hand of the Majesty on high!” (Hebrews 1:3). The eternal God (“through whom also He made the world ... upholds all things by the word of His power” [2b, 3b]) is fully and completely revealed on earth (1:3). This bodily sharing in humanity (Hebrews 2:14) takes him to the cross of purification (1:3). With this act of love completed, Jesus takes his rightful place next to God, his Father. WOW! What a story! No other faith tradition or no other religion can claim this for their leader. Neither you nor I can claim this for ourselves. Why, oh why then do we hesitate to let him reign in our lives?

The point of all this is that God had to resort to what advertisers do today. He had to get the attention of the listener. It didn’t do much good because Israel and Judah didn’t listen. God still had to punish them, but, like the parable of the vineyard (Luke 20:9-18), after sending his messengers to speak for him, he sent his son.

When the writer said, “God spoke,” he indicated that the action was complete. Nothing more needs to be said! Absolute; Final! This statement carried even more weight than when Mammy Yokum raised one finger in the air and said, “I has spoken!

There is one other point that needs to be made to gain the full impact of this statement. “God spoke” was continuous with **and** the climax of the words of the prophets. Jesus emphasized the same thought when he said that the Scriptures testify about him (John 5:39). That wasn’t enough. Jesus made it even clearer when he said that Moses and the prophets wrote about him (John 1:45). Finally, as we discussed in the last lesson, God and the Word were one and the same. Without question, God’s intentions were clear. He finished saying what needed to be said. No new revelations. That doesn’t mean that his Spirit won’t lead into more and clearer understanding of what God said. It doesn’t mean that there aren’t new visions of how that will work itself out, but it does mean that there are no new truths – that is until Jesus comes again and all mysteries are uncovered.

One small, but crucially important phrase is that he has spoken *to us* (2). He is talking to the world he loves. He is talking to us. Most important is that God spoke *in a uniquely qualified Son*. This Son is not like Adam, God’s son by creation, nor was he like Israel who was called “my son, my firstborn” (Exodus 4:22). Both of these were uniquely qualified as sons and created by God to satisfy his intentions. Jesus is uniquely qualified because of who he is and his relationship to God. Jesus’ uniqueness brings us to our proposal.

Proposal

THEREFORE, WE ARE UNDER OBLIGATION TO RECOGNIZE AND RESPOND TO JESUS’ UNIQUENESS. What makes him unique? 4 qualities

- I. HIS PLACE IS GREATER THAN THE PROPHETS AND Angels (1-2A)
- II. HIS RELATIONSHIP IS GREATER THAN ANY OTHER (2B, 3D)
- III. HIS WORK IS GREATER THAN CREATION (2BC; 3D)
- IV. HE IS THE GREAT GOD

This should be obvious if we know Jesus as the writer does. He gives four qualities about Jesus to convince us of his superiority. These qualities answer the *why* of our proposal. Also, this becomes the climax of the other verses we have studied. Allow me to remind you of the preceding proposals.

1. **To serve effectively in his kingdom, we must know his nature that gives him the right to sit on the throne!**
2. **We must make it About Jesus!**
3. **We must listen to the one who pleases God to have the right to become the children of God.**

These proposals deal with effective service, proper attitudes toward Jesus and each other, and pleasing God by listening to him. The final view of Jesus brings our study to a mountain top where we are exposed to Jesus in his divine majesty. We have been building to this point,

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especially with the last two passages. There was a method to the order of the lessons. An explanation may help us move into our final passage with a stronger desire to understand this perspective on Jesus.

John and Hebrews were probably written around the same time. It was late in the first century. Paul's writings, Colossians and Philippians were written over forty years earlier. Because of this difference, Jesus is presented in more basic concepts, using short phrases and little explanation. Some forty odd years later, questions began to be asked about Jesus. Was he really who the church said he was? As the questions grew harder, the answers became fuller. John's descriptions covered several important points about Jesus' nature. Now, let's move into the Hebrew picture of Jesus for another fuller, more complete description.

First, let me show you how we will approach this passage. It may seem cut up, but there is logic to the order. You see, this passage is designed to emphasize verse 3. In particular, the first two expressions of the nature of Jesus are the center of the verse. Let me draw you a picture of the way this looks:

- 1a God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways
- 2a in these last days has spoken to us in His Son
- 2b whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world
- 3a and He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature
- 3b and upholds all things by the word of His power
- 3c when He had made purification of sins
- 3d He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high
- 4a having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they have inherited

This format probably looks a little unusual to you. Please, let me explain. At times, when these verses are examined, we see that they can contain multiple ideas. This is true of Hebrews 1:1-4. It is full of great concepts. In order to make it easier to see these, I've used a common practice for dividing these thoughts. I have given the separate ideas an "a," "b," "c," or "d" to help you locate them. These divide the ideas in the verses. Think of it as a *verse in a verse*.

Now, let me show you another picture. This view is a particular type of outline that is used to show emphasis. In this case, it is to show what the writer of Hebrews may have had in mind when you put things in this order. In most things we read, the writer will build toward the climax, having it toward the end. That doesn't seem to be the case in this passage.

This outline is not mine. I found this in a commentary on Hebrews written by Peter T. O'Brien (The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010, page 46). I changed some of the wording, but the general structure belongs to Mr. O'Brien. It is an excellent way to understand what the writer may have been trying to convey to us. Please note that the "a," "b," "c," and "d" align with the verse breakdown that I provided above. For example, "A" in the outline uses verse 1 and 2a, "B" uses 2b, and so on.

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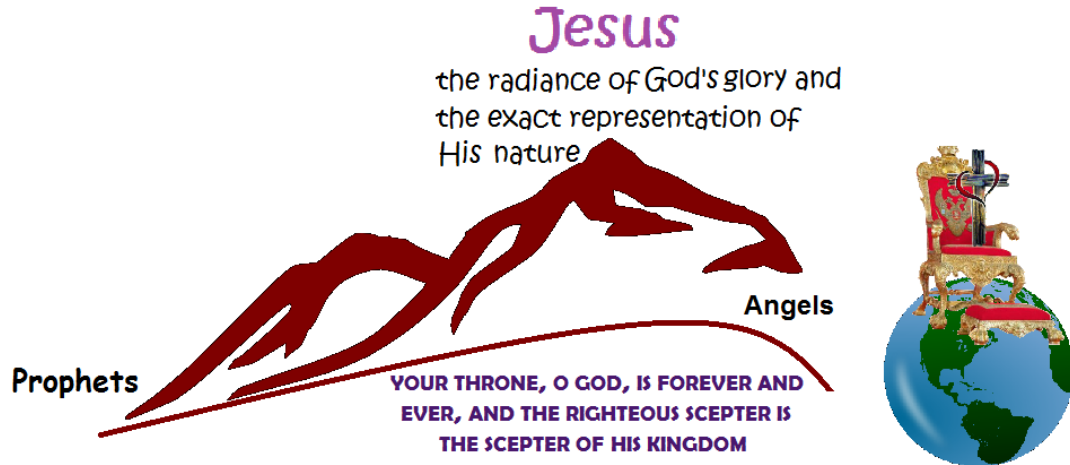
- A vv. 1–2a....The Son is greater than the prophets
- B v. 2b.....The Son is greater because he is the Son
- C v. 2c.....The Son is greater because he creates
- D vv. 3a–b ...The Son's is greater because of his nature**
- C' v. 3c.....The Son is greater because he redeems
- B' v. 3d.....The Son is greater because he is Messiah King
- A' v. 4.....The Son is greater than the angels

The center section (**D**) is the focus of these four verses. The reason is clear. It is because of his divine nature as God that he can be greater than the prophets and angels. His nature makes him the divine Son and Messiah King. His great nature works to create and redeem.

OK, let's move into the details.

Jesus is Greater than Prophets and Angels

This chapter should be seen like the view from a hill from which Jesus sees the world. His view gives him the God perspective. Look at it in this way:



When you break down this thought, the *mountain range* is in the first four verses. Prophets spoke, but God said it all in Jesus. After all, Jesus is “the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power” (Hebrews 1:3a). Verses 5-14 follow with a picture of the superiority of Jesus over angels and the created world. The point is: **God is focusing on Jesus!** If God puts his **Focus on Jesus**, shouldn't we? First, we will say just a few words about the prophets. Next, the angels come into view. After this, we will **Focus on Jesus**, the radiance of God.

Prophets

The text only tells us that the prophets spoke at different times and in different ways. We dealt with this in the introduction. God used them in the past. They were part of the Jewish history. They were part of the culture and history of Israel. That's it. Assuming that the readers were probably Jewish or familiar with Judaism, they would know something about the Prophets. The writer didn't have to say anything else. They knew God used the prophets in a lot of different ways. Sometimes, they were actors in a play. We see this when Hosea was asked to play the part of a faithful husband to an unfaithful wife (Hosea 1). Another play was when Isaiah stripped off all his clothes and wandered around naked (Isaiah 20). Jeremiah did some weird things too; he not only hid his underwear under a rock but then went back to get it after a “long time” (Jeremiah 13). Jeremiah apparently didn't mind parting with undergarments, but he couldn't be separated from the cattle yoke he had fastened to his shoulders until another prophet broke it off (Jeremiah 27 and 28). While the methods varied, the message did not. Covenant faithfulness was the message for the children of Israel. As we've already said, they were to be a light to the nations. They weren't, and the prophets told them so. They were to repent and know God. Pretty simple, yet they were not able to get things back on track.

Jesus was greater than they were because they were fully human but not divine. They did have the Spirit of God. That's what *moved them along* (2 Peter 1:21). That is, the Spirit of God

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was the source and power of their message. Jesus shared this same Spirit with God because they were the same essence. We've talked about this a lot.

Jesus greatness was in his Godness. His divine nature as God gave him the authority to speak. So, when God spoke in a *son*, he could speak with no greater authority. In the Greek, the writer said he spoke in *a* son. He didn't say *His* son like a lot of translations have it. It is understood that it is *His* (God's) Son. Why would the writer say *a* son? That's simple. It is because he has many sons who give his message. Prayerfully, everyone reading this is one of those sons (and daughters). This doesn't mean we have a special revelation like Jesus. It means God can speak His final word through us. Of course, the writer tells us who this special son is so there is no confusion about who has the final word. Our word is only about the final word. This is why we ***Focus on Jesus***.

The writer starts with the prophets in the first verse and ends with the angels in the fourth verse.

Angels

Prophets were men, but angels were a different story. They are mentioned thirteen times in the Book of Hebrews, 180 times in the New Testament, and 116 times in the Old Testament. That's a lot of appearances. Here is a list of the references to angels in Hebrews and their connection to the important issues we are studying:

1. Did he ever say to an angel that they were begotten? (1:5)
2. They worship the Son (1:6)
3. They are messengers and ministers (1:7)
4. Did he ever ask an angel to sit at his right hand? (1:13)
5. The words they spoke could not be changed (2:2)
6. He did not subject the angels to the coming world (2:5)
7. While the Son was made lower, were the angels ever crowned with glory and honor? (2:7, 9)
8. He does not give help to angels (2:16)

Do you see any patterns developing? Today, as in the day this was written, there were many beliefs about angels. These are familiar ideas about angels. Still, there are questions. What are their origins? Are they godlike? This is why he asked if they were *begotten*. As messengers of God, should they be worshiped? What is their exact relation to God? Do they sit at, near or only in the throne room of God? More questions can be asked about their power and authority. Do they or will they have any power or authority? Or, are they only the *policemen* who keep things in order?

The following chart is not designed to answer these questions. If you want to know more, you will need to do a separate study on angels. Remember, our focus is on Jesus. This section is to show how Jesus is superior to the prophets and angels. Jesus is unique. If this is true, then there can be no others like him. He stands alone in these and all qualities needed to be our God and Savior. This is why there is no other faith tradition like Christianity. No other leader of any group can claim what Jesus did.

To keep the focus, I will share some things that are said about Jesus in other books of the New Testament. These statements will give us a good picture of Jesus compared to the angels. They will show how the Bible sees Jesus compared to the angels. It should be obvious as you

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study these that Jesus is superior to the angels. No matter their place or power in the scriptures, they are not sons. While they have a great name, which is implied in verse four, we bow at the name of Jesus (Philippians 2:9-11).

Let's take a closer look:

Angels	Jesus
Did he ever say to an angel that they were begotten? (5)	“By this, the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world” (1 John 4:9).
They worship the Son (6)	“Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10).
They are messengers and ministers (7)	“This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him” (Matthew 17:5).
Did he ever ask an angel to sit at his right hand? (13)	“When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3b).
The words they spoke could not be changed (2:2)	“He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day” (John 12:48).
He did not subject to angels the coming world (2:5)	“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18).
While the Son was made lower, were the angels ever crowned with glory and honor? (2:7)	“You have crowned him with glory and honor, and have appointed him over the works of Your hands” (Hebrews 2:7).
He does not give help to angels (2:16)	“Then Jesus said to him, “Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’ Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and <i>began</i> to minister to Him” (Matthew 4:10-11).

The Hebrew writer provides the only summary we need for our purposes. “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14). He does this so that there is no confusion. The focus is on Jesus; none other!

Here is the bottom line. Jesus is superior to both the Old Testament prophets and to the angels. His word carries more weight than those who were mere men. The reason: Jesus was “the radiance of His (God’s) glory and the exact representation of His nature” (Hebrews 1:3). As you recall, this is the very center of the message in the first four verses. Jesus is superior to any and all created beings. Jesus’ actions and words are greater to all others. He sits at the place of supreme authority, ruling with God until all is returned to the original state of perfection (1 Corinthians 15:28).

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Having established Jesus' dominance over these two powerful servants of God, the writer moves toward the main point of Jesus' nature by explaining the relationship between God and Jesus as it relates to who he is and what he does. Jesus' superiority and uniqueness are viewed through his unique position between God and humanity. Let's look at this important point now.

He is Greater than Any Human Bond

For the most part, we are social creatures. Now, if you compare Susan and me, she will tell you that I'm the social one, needing to be in the public eye. Well, yes. Sometimes, this is true. While I like my privacy, I do enjoy the crowds as well; certain crowds at least. The one social tie most are drawn to is family. This human bond is central to a civilized society. It is the purest human relationship. This is why we hear so much on the importance of having a balanced family with both mother and father in the family, raising children together.

Christianity is viewed as a relational system. We believe that in Christ, we have a bond with God that other faiths do not provide. If this is true of us, it has to be true of Jesus as well. As we move toward the boldest and clearest images about Jesus that words can give us, we need to take a minute to look at how Jesus relates to God in a way that creates this relational bond we cherish.

Look at verse 2. Jesus is called a Son. While this paints a picture of love and relationship, there is something else in this that expands this image. Here is it: As a son, Jesus is *appointed heir* of all things. There are two key ideas here. First, he is appointed.

For some, this is a problem. Isn't Jesus a Son naturally? Why yes, he is. The appointment is not to be a son, but, in fact, as the Son, he has rights and authority the other sons do not have. This appointment is *natural* because he is the natural son of God. We are adopted sons. As the natural Son, the appointment by God is his divine will. You see, when Father, Son, and Spirit had pre-existent unity, there were no differences between them. When God took a body and became king in the physical world, there was a need to make this appointment because he was now living with humans as a human. In reality, the writer is saying that Jesus' appointment was because he was already God and that he shared this right because he was God. The appointment was to show that the man Jesus still had the same privileges as God. Paul said the same thing in Philippians when he talked about Jesus taking the form of a servant. Go back and look at that again. He never lost his Godness. He did gain a body. What he is appointed to is the most important idea.

Heir of all Things

The writer states that he is appointed *heir of all things*. Nothing new from the Greek as far as the meaning is concerned. It holds the idea of inheritance. Israel (as a son) was told to ask for the nations and it would be given to them as an inheritance (Psalm 2:8). Jesus, as the faithful Israelite, will be given his enemies as his footstool (Hebrews 1:13; 10:13). The big question is not what he will inherit but when. Some say now and others in the future. No, I'm not political when I say *both now and then!* I'll take a stand. The church is his now. We are his elect nation. By being in Christ, we share the inheritance as adopted sons. Paul made this clear when he wrote, "we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will" (Ephesians 1:11). He said the same thing in his farewell speech to the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20:32). We know that we do not have control of our inheritance yet. That happens in the future. Paul sees this when he writes that "we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23).

I've talked about being selfish Christians who want to use Jesus to go to heaven. Let's make a positive point out of this hope. It is OK to be driven by who Jesus is if "going to heaven" means that we are in the presence of the King. The difference is: this ***Focuses on Jesus!***

King and Lord

I contend that *the church belongs to Jesus now!* It is his kingdom today. There will be a time when everyone and everything is under his control. For now, it is certainly the church that is subject to him. This point is evident in two terms that are used of Jesus in the New Testament — King and Lord! After the resurrection, Jesus finished preparing his Apostles to set up the church and put it in gear to change the world. As the Hebrew writer will say, he is “crowned with Glory and Honor” (2:7, 9). This statement was his coronation. Officially, it was at or shortly after his ascension. After that, he “sits down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (3). From this position, he has privilege, honor, and best of all for us, the ear of God! This connection is good for us “since He always lives to make intercession” for us (Hebrews 7:25). This verse is specific about who Jesus is praying for. It is those who “draw near to God *through Him*” (Hebrews 7:25).

This idea is supported in verse eight when God says to Jesus, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.” Here God is making two things perfectly clear. First, God calls Jesus God. Remember in the John passage we talked about the Jehovah Witnesses and how they abuse John 1:1 to make Jesus less than God. Well, when I have the chance to show them, I take their Greek interlinear (a Bible with the Greek and English together so you know which Greek words were translated into English) and show them this passage where *the* God called his Son Jesus *the* God! They don’t know what to say!

This verse demands that we see Jesus as the royal heir to the throne. He sits at the right hand for now because he has work to do (John 14:2; Hebrews 7:25). In the book of Revelation, we see a somewhat different picture of his ministry. Revelation 5 points to his ministry of forgiveness as he is presented as the *Lamb of God!* His eternal ministry confirms what he did on Calvary when he spilled his blood for our cleansing (Hebrews 9:14).

While crowned in heaven, his place as Lord is spelled out in two different ways in our passage. He is Lord of Creation in two ways — Creator and Redeemer. Let’s examine this more fully.

His Work is Greater than Creation

This is our third passage that talks about Jesus as creator. Must be important; Yes? I would say a big, **bold YES!**

For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him (Colossians 1:16)

All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being ... the world was made through Him (John 1:3, 10)

... through whom also He made the world (Hebrews 1:2)

Philippians had a different purpose, so creation was not needed to support the point of the passage. For Paul (Colossians 1:16), John (John 1:3) and this writer, it is required because they want the readers to know that Jesus was not created or made. The begetting mentioned in verse five is not a beginning of existence or essence. It is the time when Jesus took a body so that he could serve humanity (Philippians 2:6-8). The Old Testament says God created. The New Testament says Jesus did. Either one is wrong, or Jesus is God!

Creation

Note that John and this passage say it was *through* Jesus that the world was made. Many of us see this as saying that when Genesis says “God said,” (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, 29), it is the same as John’s “the Word was God” (John 1:1). Others contend that it was Jesus who was the “*us*” in Genesis 2:26, “Let us make man.” We will never know for sure this side of heaven, but it makes sense, doesn’t it?

The writer expands on the creation theme in verses 10-12. “You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands.” After confirming him as creator, the writer shows the sovereign power of King Jesus by stating that he will roll them up like an old garment and toss them out. He is forever; they are not. The author has already shown the rule of Jesus over nature in verse three. He writes that Jesus “upholds all things by the word of His power.” Not only does he create but he keeps this ole world going. It is not chance language that he states that it is by the *word* of his power. He holds it up. He carries it along. Jesus’ words are powerful. This power is why his word will be the judge at the last day (John 12:48). Even so, judgment does not have to be condemnation. There is hope. The writer moves to this theme, using the expression *purification of sins*.

Redemption: the Purification of Sins

As I pointed out at the beginning of these lessons, the earth has been cursed. Paul reminds us of this in Romans 8:22. Since Jesus is the Creator of the world, it has to sadden him to see it under a curse. Thanks be to God! There is a plan in progress to lift the curse. In Romans 8:23, Paul states that the redemption of the body of the believer is what we are eagerly waiting for. This process is marked as the adoption process that will be part of the lifting of the curse. In our

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passage in Hebrews, this process is described as *purification of sins*. If you work through the rest of the book of Hebrews, you will see that this is an important theme.

While the cross is in mind here, the author does not mention the death of Christ until chapter two (9, 14). Putting this into covenant language, the Hebrew writer states, “there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it” (9:16). Leading up to this conclusion, he will tell us of Jesus’ priestly action that brought forgiveness (2:17). In 9:28, we are told that Jesus took the burden of the sins of many, leading to salvation.

It is vital at this point to take you deeper into a concept I introduced in *The Image of God*. I wrote that with the blood applied, we are “holy and blameless and beyond reproach” (Colossians 1:22). Simply put, this means that we are now clean enough to serve him in his Beloved Kingdom. Please allow me to be a bit more direct here. Jesus didn’t die so you could pray for Aunt Mary to be healed! The reason I say this is because most church prayer lists are for people that have health issues. Seldom do you ever see prayers for conversions. Sometimes we will pray for our missionaries. It’s sad but we think that our privilege of being saved is to pray for Aunt Mary and then go to heaven. Christ’s dying was about so much more than praying for the sick and afflicted.

His death on the cross was a sacrifice. Paul uses this image in Romans to help us understand that the Christian life is a demand to be a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2). This sacrifice means that we are conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). As bearers of that image, we serve under the guidance of the Spirit of Christ to continue his mission of announcing the nearness of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 4:17). This commission (Matthew 28:18-20) appoints us as Ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20).

These images alone should be sufficient to convince us of the uniqueness and authority of Jesus. Even so, the writer now reaches the top of the mountain with two expressions that should remove any doubts as to the total Godness of Jesus.

He is the Great God!

I am convinced that there is no clearer language about the relationship of Jesus to God than in this verse. Two expressions are used. Each is distinctive yet both give us the very same idea: Jesus is God! Let's dig deeper.

Radiance

Jesus radiates the very nature of God. It doesn't get any closer. Some might say that God's glory is his own and Jesus only reflects it. The Greeks would agree with either idea. How do we know which to use? Context should tell us. Based on the next phrase and what we assume the writer knows from John and Paul, I lean toward the first because Jesus and God share the same essence. The author would have known this. From this understanding, Jesus is the source that radiates. This insight raises a question: What does he radiate? What exactly is this glory that he shows us?

Glory was introduced in John. To understand it, we need to back up into the Old Testament. There, we get a different picture from what most people think of when they hear the phrase *glory of God*. For many, it is like his face is shining. Some think of heaven. It is the very presence of God. To see this image, let's start with Deuteronomy 5:24. There, Moses says that God has shown his glory. It is something that has presence. In this verse, his greatness and voice are also included. This gives the idea of the actual presence of God. Next, in our very brief survey, go to Exodus 40 and the dedication of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. The writer states that the glory of the Lord filled the house. It was like a thick smoke. So thick, the priests couldn't do their work. One more will do for now. Look at a very sad picture when God's glory left Israel. The reason it was gone was that the Ark of the Covenant had been stolen (1 Samuel 4). The ark was the seat of God in the Tabernacle. It was God's presence. There are many more places in the Hebrew writings that this is described. For example, there are nine references to the Glory of God in the Psalms (8:5; 19:1; 29:3; 57:5, 11; 62:7; 63:11; 79:9; 108:5). All of these indicate the presence of God.

These passages make it easy to see how Jesus is the radiance of the glory of God. He is God with us so this is the perfect explanation of glory. If Jesus is God as we have taught, then it certainly makes sense that what he *radiates* is the very nature and presence of God with us. He is Emmanuel. He is the Word made flesh. In this, we discover the very goodness of God. Did you notice that back in the Exodus 40 account with Moses? If you read it, you saw that Moses asked to see God's glory. God told him that he would see his goodness. The greatest glory of God is his justice and his love. Together, they make him the merciful God who forgives and protects. God, show us your glory and your goodness. "I did," he said. "I showed you Jesus." Isn't this exactly what Jesus meant when he told Philip that "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him" (John 14:7).

As I stated above, the writer adds one more picture — the exact representation of his character.

Exact Representation

The Hebrew writers were fond of parallel expressions that said the same thing. They could be two word-for-word phrases or two ideas stated in a similar fashion. This is what we

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have here. As we discussed above, Jesus reflected the very nature of God. Here, the words are different but the meaning is the same. Exact representation means that Jesus had God's nature.

To look at the phrase "character of his nature" (my translation), the idea of the first word (character or exact representation) is like an image on a coin. It is the physical form of the king/ruler that stands behind the coin. The coin is only as good as the one who stands behind it. Its value is equal to the authority of the one who made it. In this respect, Jesus is only as good, complete, and absolute as God is. This word alone would have given us a great image of who Jesus is, yet the writer doesn't stop here. What he does next is to add an absolute quality to the character. The character is his very nature. This word has the sense of the idea of nature. Let's look into this.

This same Greek word is used three times in the book of Hebrews. The other two are 3:14 and 11:1. Both are translated "assurance." This raises the issue of how nature and assurance come from the same word? That's a great question. We have to look at the basic meaning behind both of these terms. If we look at this root meaning, we find that the word is a compound. It is made up of the word "under" and "to stand," so, the base meaning is to *stand under*. This pictures a foundation. Already you can see how we get assurance, can't you? As in 11:1, faith is what *stands under us*, giving us the assurance that what we believe is true. Because it is the most basic idea or concept under something, it is part of the nature of that which it stands under. Picture it like this: the foundation of a house is part of the house, right? We don't say the foundation is separate from the house. In the same way, Jesus shared the same underlying nature as God has. The writer is giving us the picture of the nature that makes God a God. Jesus shares that nature. This is what the writer wants us to know.

As noted, both words say the same thing. In fact, they say the same thing that Colossians 1 says. Jesus is the image of God. These just define that image more. These expressions say what Philipians says. Jesus is the very nature of God. You guessed it. Same as John who says the word was God and came to live with us.

Radiance of God

NOTES

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Discussion Questions

1. Discuss and compare these three terms: Revelation, Inspiration, and Enlightenment! How do these relate to the Word of God? (We didn't discuss the last two. You will have to explore this yourself.) Further, is God revealing new, never before mentioned ideas or events? Please explain.
2. If there are no new revelations, how does the Spirit lead people today? Isn't it a revelation if the Spirit opens your mind/heart to an idea, ministry, etc.? Please explain.
3. Study Mr. O'Brien's outline. What are your thoughts about this? Do you see how the structure leads to the conclusion that Jesus is God? Please explain.
4. How is Jesus superior to the Prophets and Angels? Be specific.
5. Compare and contrast the *natural* son to the *adopted* son. What conclusions do you draw about the nature of Jesus and our relationship with him from these ideas?
6. What does the idea of *king* hold for you? What if we used terms like *boss, manager, or CEO* instead of King? Would that help us better understand the concept of Jesus ruling our lives?
7. What difference does it make that Jesus is King? How should this affect our lives? Be specific.
8. Once again, the idea of sacrifice and living sacrifice came up. Compare and contrast the sacrifice of Christ to our expected sacrifice.
9. Compare and contrast the two expressions: Radiance of God and Exact character of God. Report your findings.
10. How does your idea of the glory of God match what I provided? Please discuss how you understand his glory. Discuss this concept in light of Moses' experience with God (Page 66; Exodus 33:20).
11. What do we mean by "The coin is only as good as the one who stands behind it?" How does this contribute to our confirming to the image of Christ Jesus (Romans 8:29)?