

The Express Image of God

Heb 1:1-9

SS Lesson for 10/02/2016

Devotional Scripture: Col 1:15-19

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson reveals the reasons why Jesus is **The Express Image of God**. The **study's aim** is to have a greater sense of awe of Jesus Christ because of who He is. The **study's application** is to acknowledge the deity of Jesus Christ and His superiority over all people and things.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Heb 1:3

Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

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 first major unit of the body of the epistle begins at this point and extends through the dramatic appeal of 4:14-16 for the readers to avail themselves of the resources available to them at “the throne of grace” (4:16). The emphasis of the whole unit is on the sonship of Jesus Christ which the writer viewed as a kingly sonship in accord with the Davidic Covenant.

Drawing heavily on the witness of Old Testament revelation, the writer demonstrated the uniqueness of the Son. The title of Son, and the prerogatives it entails, elevate Him above all comparison with the angels. Those who see in Hebrews ties with sectarian Judaism point to the highly developed angelology of the Dead Sea sect. These verses offer an effective rebuttal against any tendency to give excessive prominence to angels.

1:5. The two questions in this verse show that the name **Son** belongs to Messiah in a sense in which it never belonged to **the angels**. Obviously “Son” is the superior name which Jesus “has inherited” (v. 4). But it is clear that the special sense of this name, in its kingly ramifications, is what basically concerns the writer. The quotation in verse 5a is drawn from Psalm 2:7, while the quotation in Hebrews 1:5b comes from either 2 Samuel 7:14 or 1 Chronicles 17:13. Psalm 2 is an enthronement psalm in which God “adopts”

the Davidic King as His “Son.” That this is what the writer to the Hebrews understood is confirmed in Hebrews 1:5a by the quotation from the Davidic Covenant. No doubt the “today” in the expression **today I have become Your Father** was understood by the author of Hebrews to refer to Messiah’s sitting at the right hand of God (cf. v. 3). Of course the Lord Jesus Christ has always been the eternal Son of God. In a collective sense, the angels are called “sons of God” in the Old Testament (Job 38:7, marg.), but the writer was thinking of the title **Son** in the sense of the Davidic Heir who is entitled to ask God for dominion over the whole earth (cf. Ps. 2:8). In this sense the title belongs uniquely to Jesus and not to the angels.

1:6. The prerogatives of the One who bears this superlative title are set forth beginning with this verse. Instead of the NIV’s **And again, when God brings His Firstborn into the world**, it would be preferable to translate, “and when He again brings the Firstborn into the world.” The reference is to the Second Advent when the kingly prerogatives of the Son will be recognized with open angelic **worship** (cf. Ps. 97:7 where the LXX rendering “**angels**” correctly renders the text).

1:7-9. In a pair of contrasting quotations, the author juxtaposed the servant-hood of **the angels** (v. 7) and the eternal dominion of **the Son** (vv. 8-9). It is possible that, in line with one strand of Jewish thought about angels (cf. 2 Esdras 8:21-22), the writer understood the statement of Psalm 104:4 (quoted in Heb. 1:7) as suggesting that angels often blended their mutable natures with **winds** or **fire** as they performed the tasks God gave them. But in contrast with this mutability, the Son’s **throne** is eternal and immutable (v. 8). The quotation found in verses 8-9 is derived from Psalm 45:6-7 which describes the final triumph of God’s messianic King. The writer extended this citation further than the previous ones, no doubt because the statements of the psalmist served well to highlight truths on which the author of Hebrews desired to elaborate. The King the psalmist described had **loved righteousness and hated wickedness**. This points to the holiness and obedience of Christ while He was on earth, to which reference will be repeatedly made later (cf. Heb. 3:1-2; 5:7-8; 7:26; 9:14). And though this King thus deservedly enjoys a superlative **joy**, still He has **companions** in that joy. The reference to “companions” is likewise a significant theme for the writer. The same word *metochoi* (“companions or sharers”) is employed in 3:1, 14 of Christians (it is also used in 12:8). Since the King has attained His joy and dominion through a life of steadfast righteousness, it might be concluded that His companions will share His experience by that same means. This inference will later become quite clear (cf. 12:28).

1:10-12. The immutability of the King-Son is further stressed by the statements now quoted from Psalm 102:25-27. A simple “and” (*kai*, disguised a bit by NIV’s **He also says**) links the quotation in these verses with that in Hebrews 1:8-9. That the author construed the words of Psalm 102 as likewise addressed to the Son cannot be reasonably doubted. The Son, then, is **Lord** and has created both **earth and the heavens** (cf. Heb. 1:2). But even when the present creation wears out like an old **garment** and is exchanged for a new one, the Son will remain unchanged. The reference here of course is to the transformation of the heavens and earth which will occur after the Millennium and will introduce the eternal state (2 Peter 3:10-13). Yet even after those cataclysmic events the Son’s **years will never end**. This certainly points to His personal eternity, but it is also likely that the word “years” stands for all that they contain for the Son, including an eternal throne and scepter as well as unending joy with His companions. The writer definitely taught that Messiah’s kingdom would survive the final “shaking” of the creation (cf. Heb. 12:26-28).

1:13-14. The writer drew this section to a climax with a final Old Testament quotation, one which is crucial to the entire thought of the epistle. It is taken from Psalm 110 which the author later employed in his elaboration of the Melchizedek priesthood of the Lord Jesus. Here he cited verse 1 of the psalm to highlight the final victory of the Son over His enemies. If the Son is to have an eternal throne (Heb. 1:8), such a victory obviously awaits Him. But the victory is His and not the angels’. Their role, by contrast, is **to serve those who will inherit salvation**. It should not be automatically assumed that “salvation” here refers to a believer’s past experience of regeneration. On the contrary it is something future as both the context and the words “will inherit” suggest. As always, the writer of Hebrews must be understood to reflect the ethos of Old Testament thought, especially so here where a chain of references to it form the core of his argument. And it is particularly in the Psalms, from which he chiefly quoted in this chapter, that the term “salvation” has a well-defined sense. In the Psalms this term occurs repeatedly to describe the deliverance of God’s people from the oppression of their **enemies** and their consequent enjoyment of God’s blessings. In the Septuagint, the Greek Bible so familiar to the writer, the word “salvation” (*sōtēria*) was used in this sense in Psalms 3:2, 8; 18:2, 35, 46, 50; 35:3; 37:39; 71:15; 118:14-15, 21; 132:16; and elsewhere. This meaning is uniquely suitable here where the Son’s own triumph over enemies has just been mentioned. That the readers were under external pressure there is little reason to doubt. They had endured persecution

in the past and were exhorted not to give up now (Heb. 10:32-36). Here the writer reminded them that the final victory over all enemies belongs to God's King and that the angels presently serve those who are destined to share in that victory, that is, to "inherit salvation."

Commentary from Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

A major theme of the book of Hebrews is the greatness of Christ. The book establishes that Jesus Christ is greater than angels, greater than Moses, and greater than Aaron and the high priests of Israel. It is appropriate, then, that the book begins with a summary statement of the greatness of the Lord Jesus. Hebrews 1:3 is part of a lengthier description of the Person and work of Christ. The first two phrases speak of the Person of the Lord. Christ is said to be "the brightness of His [the Father's] glory." While the word translated "brightness" can sometimes refer to reflected light, here it "denotes the radiance shining forth from the source of light" (Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Eerdmans). From Him radiates the very glory of God, for He is God in the flesh and fully reveals God's glory (John 1:14). The concept of glory is rather difficult to grasp. It speaks of God's intrinsic majesty, honor, and perfection, especially in relation to His holiness and righteousness (Elwelt, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Baker). All these are perfectly manifested in the Person of Jesus Christ, the "Lord of glory" (Jas. 2:1). Second, the Lord Jesus Christ is called "the express image of his person" (Heb. 1:3). We can paraphrase this statement this way: "He is the exact representation of God's essence." Christ expresses exactly what God is like in His nature. This is because Christ is God in the flesh. Although He exists separately from the Father as God the Son, He is exactly the same as God the Father in His nature. This is what Paul meant when he wrote that Christ "is the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), and it is why Jesus Himself could tell Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). The third descriptive phrase in the golden text focuses on one aspect of Christ's work, yet this work also is an expression of His nature. Christ is said to be "upholding all things." This is a present and continuing work of the Lord. He is literally carrying, or bearing, all things. This means that He sustains or preserves all that exists; indeed, in Him "all things consist" (Col. 1:17), or hold together. The idea is that "the Son carries 'all things' to bring them to their destined end" (Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Baker). The One who created all things (John 1:3; Heb. 1:2) also sustains all things, and He does so by the "word of his power" (Heb. 1:3). Just as He created by simply speaking the universe into existence (Gen. 1), so He merely speaks and that universe is preserved. We find in our golden text a powerful revelation of the deity and power and sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ. To Him we owe our existence and continuing presence in this world. To Him we owe eternal praise for the glory He possesses and for the work He has done and continues to do as our sovereign Master and Redeemer.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

A good way to start a lively discussion is to ask people who is the all-time greatest in a particular field. The greatest athlete, the greatest artist, the greatest political leader, the greatest singer, the greatest writer—everyone who has an interest in the activity will have an opinion. And most of those interested will have opinions that differ. Our text for today begins to make a case for the greatest. It states that Jesus is the climax of all that God has done in history, that he is the greatest in God's plan because he is the divine Son of God. Those who wonder who is greatest in God's plan have their answer; and on this question, no one can afford to be indifferent. Everything in life is at stake in this most important matter.

The letter to the Hebrews is a book with an origin shrouded in mystery but with a message of enormous influence. Hebrews does not name its author, unlike other New Testament letters. In the early centuries of the church, some believed that it was written by Paul. But although it does show a connection with Paul's circle (his associate Timothy is mentioned in Hebrews 13:23), the treatise is written in a style very different from that normally seen in Paul's letters. In fact, the style of Hebrews is different from all other books of the New Testament. We can say with some confidence that the letter was written by someone who was influenced by Paul or his associates, but who wrote no other book that survives to the present. Some have suggested Apollos, Barnabas, or Priscilla as possible authors, but these remain mere speculation. Even so, we can infer much about the circumstances that this letter addresses. Hebrews emphasizes Christ's supremacy, his fulfillment of the Old Testament, and the utter necessity of continuing in faith in him. Thus it seems likely that Hebrews was written to Jews who had put faith in Jesus when they heard the gospel, but who then faced intense social pressure to renounce that faith and return to the practice of Judaism. Conversations between these Christians and their Jewish families and friends are easy to imagine. Perhaps the unbelievers had said that while Jesus may have

been an important person, perhaps even an angel, he simply did not fit the prophecies about God's promised king. Returning to the old ways would mean continuing to be part of God's "chosen people" while no longer experiencing the ostracism that faith in Jesus prompted. Hebrews offers a sharp correction to that line of thinking. Yes, God had been at work in Israel to fulfill his promises. But those promises were indeed fulfilled—in a deep, thorough, and unexpected way—by Jesus. Because God's divine Son, Jesus, is the greatest in God's plan, then to reject Jesus is to reject God and his plan. But to hold to Jesus is to experience the fullness of God's promises and the inauguration of God's eternal blessings.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Jesus is God's Revelation (Heb 1:1-3)

1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,
2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through 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, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Revelation spoken before Jesus came to earth (1)

Revelation starting with Moses (Luke 24:25-27)

26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Revelation written in the Law (John 1:45)

45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

Revelation through the prophets who testified about Jesus and His power (Acts 10:43)

43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Revelation through the promise made to David (Rom 1:1-4)

2 the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures 3 regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, 4 and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

Revelation in Jesus (2)

In Jesus because Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev 19:10)

10 At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

In Jesus through the gospel in the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:3-4)

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures

In Jesus because Jesus and God are One (John 14:9-11)

9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. 11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.

In Jesus because Jesus is God in bodily form (Col 2:9)

9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,

In Jesus because Jesus is with and is God (John 1:1)

1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Revelation through Jesus (3)

Revelation through Jesus because He came from Heaven (John 3:31)

31 "The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.

Revelation through Jesus because Jesus is the glory of God (John 1:14)

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Revelation through Jesus because Jesus is the light of the gospel (2 Cor 4:4)

4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the light of Christ, who is the image of God.

Revelation through Jesus because Jesus is the image of God (Col 1:15)

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

On the Right Hand (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

In the English language the phrase *right hand* is rich in symbolism. It can mean the hand that is normally stronger (than the left). The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites a source from the year 1000 with this connotation. Another meaning is to symbolize friendship or alliance. This connotation is cited as early as 1591. We normally shake hands with the right hand. A third meaning is to indicate a person of usefulness or importance, an indispensable or efficient helper. We use the phrase *right-hand man*, a usage that goes back to 1537. In 1863 General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson's left arm was amputated after a wound (which eventually proved fatal); to this General Robert E. Lee exclaimed, "You have lost your left arm, but I have lost my right!" A similar meaning is that the right hand is the position of honor. This is probably the meaning intended in [Hebrews 1:3](#). After he had fulfilled his task on earth, Jesus ascended and was seated at the right hand of the Father. Jesus represents the right hand of God in all ways—in strength, in alliance, and in honor. Do we hold Jesus in as much honor as the Father does?

Supremacy of Jesus (Heb 1:4-9)

4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. 5 For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son"?"

6 But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

7 And of the angels He says: "Who makes His Angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire."

8 But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.

9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions."

Supremacy above angels (4)

Supremacy above angels because Jesus has all authority and dominion (Eph 1:20-23)

20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Supremacy above angels because Jesus has supremacy over everything (Col 1:18)

18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Supremacy above angels because Jesus is the head over every power and authority (Col 2:10)

10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

Supremacy above angels because angels are in submission to Jesus (1 Peter 3:22)

22 who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand — with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

Supremacy because of being God's Son (5)

God's Son because God proclaimed it (Matt 17:5)

5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

God's Son because of the miracles Jesus performed (Matt 14:32-33)

32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. 33 Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

God's Son because even demons recognized it (Luke 4:41)

41 Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ.

God's Son because the Holy Spirit confirmed it (John 1:32-34)

32 Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. 33 I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' 34 I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."

God's Son because Jesus is the Christ (John 11:25-27)

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" 27 "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

God's Son because the Bible was written to prove it (John 20:31)

31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

God's Son because it is the truth (Matt 16:16)

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Supremacy that deserves worship (6)

Deserves worship because Jesus is the King (Matt 2:2)

2 and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

Deserves worship because eventually every knee will bow and tongue will confess Jesus as Lord (Phil 2:9-11)

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Deserves worship because Jesus is the slain Lamb worthy of worship (Rev 5:6-9)

6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. 8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

Deserves worship because Jesus is the firstborn of God and all should worship Him (Heb 1:6)

6 And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."

Deserves worship because Jesus is the head of all things (Eph 1:9-10)

9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment — to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

Supremacy that rules God's Kingdom (7-9)

Jesus' rule will be one of wisdom and righteousness (Jer 23:5)

5 "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.

Jesus must rule until God puts all His enemies under His feet (1 Cor 15:22-25)

22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

Jesus rules over an eternal kingdom (2 Peter 1:10-11)

10 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the eternal King (1 Tim 1:17)

17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Jesus will reign for ever and ever (Rev 11:15)

15 The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

Jesus was born to have the government on His shoulders (Isa 9:6)

6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

God Has Spoken By His Son

In one sentence, the author sums up the whole of the Old Testament: God spoke to the readers ancestors from time to time, over many years, in many different ways. He spoke directly to some, as He did to Adam and Eve. He spoke through dreams and visions, such as those of Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar. He even spoke through Balaam's donkey. But most often He spoke by means of the prophets, who then conveyed this revelation to the Israelites, the people of God. The Old Testament contained a written account of much of this revelation. The readers of Hebrews were familiar with this revelation, so that the author of this book will feel free to refer to it often, expecting his readers to know what he is talking about.

It is the next words – those found at the beginning of verse two – which come with boldness and authority: **“In these last days He has spoken to us by his Son.”** We would do well to observe that the author is not belittling the truth or the value of this Old Testament revelation. It is entirely true and authoritative – God spoke. It anticipates and is fully consistent with God's speaking *by His Son*. But while there is a clear emphasis on the continuity of God's revelation to men, there is also a very clear element of contrast. Thus, we can summarize these contrasts in this way:

God Has Spoken . . .

In olden times Now, in these last days

To our fathers To us By various means By one means At various times At one point in time Partially Fully and once for all Through the prophets Through His Son Through prophets who spoke for God Through Jesus, who spoke as God

Let me make one clarification. When the author writes that God has spoken by (or in) His Son, he does not refer only to the words that Jesus has spoken – those words in red in some Bibles. The author means for us to understand that God revealed Himself to us by our Lord's character, by His words, and by His deeds. Jesus reveals God to man by His entire being.

The Uniqueness of the Son

God has spoken *through His Son* (literally *“through Son”*). We know, of course, that this **“son”** is His Son, Jesus Christ. But what does it mean to be the Son? Put a different way, “So God has spoken through the Son, why should I listen to Him?” Who is the Son, that He deserves to be heard? The author is about to tell us. These powerful words, stated in such eloquent Greek, declare that Jesus Christ is absolutely unique, so unique that He stands apart from and above every other creature, including the angels. Jesus Christ is someone to whom we should pay close attention. This point will be driven home in Hebrews 2:1-4, but for now let us look at those things which make the Son unique, which set Him apart from and above the angels.

The Son has been appointed heir of all things. An heir is one who will inherit something from another. An heir is one who is related to the one through whom the inheritance will come. In a sense, an heir is one who is designated or appointed as such, usually by means of a will. The Son has been **“appointed”** as such by the Father. It may well be that the author is thinking of this Old Testament text (Psalm 2:8).

Because the author has set out to show the superiority of the Son to the angels, my mind was drawn to one angel (Lucifer) who sought to possess “all things” in a very different way (Isaiah 14:12-15).

The Son, the Lord Jesus, is designated by the Father to be the heir to the throne, and thus to rule over all creation. Satan first sought to seize the throne, and then later he arrogantly claimed to possess it, promising to hand it over to the Son if He would bow down in worship (see Matthew 4:8-10). The Father who sits on the throne is the One who deserves all glory and honor and praise (Revelation 4:9-11).

It is He who has designated the Son as the heir. And, let us not forget that those who are the **“sons of God”** by faith in Jesus Christ are joint heirs with Him and will reign with Him (Romans 8:16-17; see also Galatians 4:7 and Revelation 3:21; Revelation 5:9-10).

The Son is the One through whom the Father **created the universe**. The writer to the Hebrews is certainly not alone in declaring the Lord Jesus to be the Creator (John 1:1-3).

Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we live, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we live (1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:15-16).

¹⁵How aptly Moffatt put it when he wrote, “. . . ‘what the Son was to possess he had been instrumental in making’ (Moffatt).” It is little wonder that the One through whom all things have come into being should inherit them (Romans 11:36).

We should also go on to say that if Jesus, the Son, is Creator then He surely is not a part of creation in the sense that He is a created being (as are the angels). He was there, in the beginning, before the angels were called into being. How much greater is the Creator than that which He creates.

The Son is the radiance of the Father’s glory. One of the first times we encounter God’s glory is found in Exodus 16, when God’s glory is revealed in response to the grumbling of the Israelites. You can see why this produced fear. The glory of God appears at Mount Sinai, and once again produces fear, prompting the Israelites to keep their distance (Exodus 19 and 24). Actually, God’s glory was so terrifying that the people wanted Moses to mediate for them, so that they would not encounter God in such close proximity (Deuteronomy 5:22-27).

God’s glory was frightening, causing men to keep their distance. Even Moses could not look fully on His glory (Exodus 33:18-23).

Moses reflected this glory but, as Paul is determined to make very clear to us, the evidence of that glory faded (2 Corinthians 3:12-13).

When the Son of God took on human flesh at His incarnation, He manifested God’s glory to men. Thus John could write (John 1:14).

And to this the Apostle Paul says a hearty “Amen!” (2 Corinthians 4:5-6).

It is this to which the writer to the Hebrews refers. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, displays the glory of God to men. That glory was not usually evident in spectacular ways, but there were those rare occasions when the curtain was lifted, and greater outward evidences of it were seen, such as at His baptism¹⁶ and at His transfiguration.¹⁷ And what glory He now displays from heaven (Revelation 1:12-19).

This One – the Son – is He who radiates the glory of God, and yet this glory does not force men to keep their distance (as was the case in the Old Testament); it beckons men, women and children to draw near, as so many have done.

The Son is the manifestation of the Father’s essence. The reason why the Son radiates the glory of God is that He is of one essence with the Father. This was a topic of great debate in the Arian Controversy, and our text in Hebrews was one of the primary texts that the church fathers employed to refute the Arian error that Jesus was “like the Father” but not of the same essence. The Bible clearly indicates that the two are of the same essence, as implied or indicated elsewhere in Scripture (John 14:9)

26 Eight days later the disciples were again together in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and examine my hands. Extend your hand and put it into my side. Do not continue in your unbelief, but believe.” 28 Thomas replied to him, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:26-28)

Among whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of those who do not believe so they would not see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4).

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation (Colossians 1:15).

For in him all the fullness of deity lives in bodily form (Colossians 2:9).

And so the faithful commentators observe:

“Just as the glory is really in the effulgence, so the being (Gk. *hypostasis*) of God is really in Christ, who is its impress, its exact representation and embodiment.”

“What God essentially is, is made manifest in Christ. To see Christ is to see what the Father is like.”

The Son upholds all things by His powerful Word. In the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, we read the repeated statement, “**Then God said, ‘Let there be . . .’**” We know that God spoke a word, calling all creation to order. The writer to the Hebrews is well aware of this, for later in his epistle he writes,

By faith we understand that **the worlds were set in order at God’s command**, so that the visible has its origin in the invisible (Hebrews 11:3, emphasis mine).

What God starts, God sustains. And so it is that we know that just as our Lord was the One through whom God made the universe, so He is the One who sustains it (Colossians 1:16-17).

Those who reject Jesus as the Promised Messiah want to have nothing to do with Him. They want to be left alone. Worse yet, they want Him to go away. It is such folks who cried, “**Away with Him!**” It seems to me that at least in some aspects of the Great Tribulation, our Lord gives men what they have asked for by withdrawing His hand from sustaining the cosmos. The Savior who is also the Sustainer of the Universe keeps silent, letting the universe spin out of control (Mark 13:24-25).

In reading Hannah’s prayer this past week, I noted that she associated God’s power as Creator with His power as Protector and Provider (1 Samuel 2:8-9).

He Who created the universe sustains it, and it is He Who also created me, physically and spiritually. Surely I can trust Him to sustain me, just as He does His cosmic creation.

The Son accomplished cleansing for sins. The first major event after creation is the fall of mankind. Sin enters the world, along with its deadly consequences. The Old Testament law and the sacrificial system did not solve the sin problem; it merely served to put off the consequences until a permanent solution arrived. It was the Son of God who removed sin once for all (Acts 10:38-43; Acts 13:38-39; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

The writer does not take this occasion to delve deeply into the atoning work of Jesus for that matter will be taken up much more fully later in the book (this is, after all, the author’s introduction to the book). He accomplished a remedy for sin. It is something that is already done. As our Lord Himself put it, “**It is finished!**”

The Son sat down at the Father’s right hand. It is only *after* our Lord accomplished cleansing for sins that He sat down. That is because He had finished His work of cleansing sins. But the author wants us to know more than just that the Son sat down. He wants us to take note of *where* the Son was seated – at the right hand of the Father. The right hand is the hand of power. The right hand of God is the place of access and intercession. It is at the right hand of the Father that the Son will await the Father’s indication that it is time for the Son to subdue His enemies and assume His throne.

So then, exalted to the right hand of God, and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, he has poured out what you both see and hear (Acts 2:33).

God exalted him to his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31).

55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked intently toward heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 “Look!” he said. “I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” (Acts 7:55-56)

The right hand of the Father is the place from which one may intercede on behalf of others:

Who is the one who will condemn? Christ is the one who died (and more than that, he was raised), who is at the right hand of God, and who also is interceding for us (Romans 8:34).

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/unique-ness-and-authority-jesus-christ-hebrews-11-24>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The letter’s opening connects Jesus with the great history of God’s dealings with his people. Jesus does not break with that history but brings it to God’s intended climax. Today’s passage begins an extended explanation of Jesus’ fulfillment of every aspect of God’s promises. Yet remarkably, Jesus is not mentioned by name in today’s text; he will not be mentioned by name until Hebrews 2:9. But our author knows that the first-century readers are quite familiar with the story of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. He wants to make sure that they understand its implications. The familiarity of this story should give us pause. The one whom Hebrews proclaims as the greatest figure in God’s plan is the divine Son who experienced all the tests to which humans are subject. He is the one who died a tortuous, humiliating death on a Roman cross. The king who is exalted above even angels is the crucified one, raised again to triumphant life as he bears the marks of his death (John 20:27; Revelation 5:6). The subjects of this king suffer rejection and persecution as he did. They are pressured to give up the path of submission to God as was Jesus when challenged to come down from the cross (Matthew 27:40-42). But the stakes are too high ever to give in to such pressure. The Son stands above angels and earthly kings in authority, exalted to the very throne of God. To belong to Jesus is to belong to God and gain eternal life; to reject him is to reject God and forfeit that life.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. In the past God revealed Himself through others, speaking through prophets (Heb. 1:1)
2. In the last days God has revealed Himself through His own Son, Jesus, the Creator of the world (vs. 2)
3. When you hear and read about Jesus, you are hearing and reading about God (vs. 3)
4. Jesus holds the universe together
5. No created being compares to Jesus. The angels and all creation are subservient to Him (vss. 4-7)
6. God has put Jesus on the throne forever. His reign is characterized by righteousness (vss. 8-9)