

“The Uniqueness of Christ”

(Part 2)

Heb. 1:2-3

- INTRO. - I read a well-known quote on the uniqueness of Christ last week. Here is another one: “Someone has said that Jesus Christ came from the bosom of the Father to the bosom of a woman. He put on humanity that we might put on divinity. He became Son of Man that we might become sons of God. He was born contrary to the laws of nature, lived in poverty, was reared in obscurity, and only once crossed the boundary of the land in which He was born—and that in His childhood. He had no wealth or influence and he neither training nor education in the world’s schools. His relatives were inconspicuous and uninfluential. In infancy He startled a king. In boyhood He puzzled the learned doctors. In manhood He ruled the course of nature. He walked upon the billows and hushed the sea to sleep. He healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for His services. He never wrote a book and yet all the libraries of the world could *not* hold the books about Him. He never wrote a song, yet He has furnished the theme for more songs than all the songwriters together. He never founded a college, yet all the schools together cannot boast of as many students as He has. He never practiced medicine and yet He has healed more broken hearts than all the doctors have healed broken bodies. This Jesus Christ is the stat of astronomy, the rock of geology, the lion and the lamb of zoology, the harmonizer of all discords, and the healer of all diseases. Throughout history great men have come and gone, yet He lives on.

Herod could *not* kill Him. Satan could *not* seduce Him. Death could *not* destroy Him and the grave could *not* hold Him.”

- Jesus Christ is different from any other person in history you could name. He is different from Buddha, or Mohammed, or Confucius. He is *not* like any other religious leader.

- What’s the difference? The difference is, that you can have Buddhism without Buddha, or Confucianism without Confucius, or Islam without Mohammed – but you cannot have Christianity with Jesus Christ.

- The bones of those other men are still in their graves, but Jesus Christ is alive and eternal. With all those other religions you have a teaching to embrace, and example to follow, or a set of philosophical guidelines – but Christianity is *not* a religion at all – it is a personal relationship with the risen, eternal Christ.

- ILL. – It’s a lot like getting married. When you get married, you don’t get the “marriage religion,” you get a husband or a wife. And that is what it is like when you become a Christian. You don’t get the Christian religion – you get Jesus Christ Himself.

- 1 John 5:12 tells us “He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.” Christianity is *not* a code or a creed or a cause – it is Christ Himself!

- And unlike other leaders of world religions, Jesus does *not point* the way – He proclaims, “I am the way.” He is absolutely unique. There is none other like Him. And there is no other NT that highlights this truth great than the Book of Hebrews.

- And right at the very beginning of this book, we have this laid out for us. In vv. 1-2a he highlights the uniqueness of God revelation in His Son, and then (in vv. 2b-3) he give us 7 incredible truths concerning Him. We started going through these last time, but we did *not* get through the entire list. We saw:

I. THE UNIQUENESS OF HIS APPOINTMENT (v. 2b)

- Verse 2 continues, “...whom He appointed heir of all things...” He begins with the future rather than the past, and he declares that Jesus Christ is the appointed heir of all things. Everything that exists is His inheritance – from atoms to solar systems. Secondly, we saw:

II. THE UNIQUENESS OF HIS AGENCY (v. 2c)

- *Not only* the end, but also the beginning. Go back to v. 2 again, “through whom also He made the world.” Jesus Christ is the *agent*, through whom God the Father created the world.

- This makes Him absolutely unique. What other religious leader could ever say, “I made the world”? Only Jesus can say that! Mohammed can’t say that. Buddha can’t say that. Confucius can’t say that. Only Jesus. Thirdly we saw:

III. THE UNIQUENESS OF HIS APPEARANCE (v. 3a)

- Look at the very first part of v. 3, “And He is the radiance of His glory...” Jesus Christ is the manifestation of the glory of God on earth. He is the light of God that came to shine in the darkness of our world. “In Him was life, and [that] life was the light of men.” (John 1:4)

- He “was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.” He was “the Word [that] became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

- All this we saw last time, but today we need to go on through the rest of the list. We need to see the last four elements of His uniqueness – and we begin with:

IV. THE UNIQUENESS OF HIS ATTRIBUTES (v. 3b)

- Go back to v. 3, “...He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature...” As I said last week, *many* Bible scholars put these two together because they are very similar – and yet, they are *not* the same.

- That phrase “the exact representation of His nature” means that He is equal with God the Father. He has the same nature and attributes. Whereas the previous phrase points to His *appearance*, this one points to His *essence*.

- The word that is used for “nature” (there) is the Greek word “hupostasis.” It means “substance.” It refers to the very essence of God.

- The meaning of this word is expressed in Col. 2:9. A literal translation of that verse is, “For in him alone permanently abides all the essence of deity, the state of being God in bodily form.” So both Paul and the author of Hebrews clearly set forth the essential deity of the Son.

- The word used for “exact representation” is “charakter (with a “k” in the middle),” from which we get our English word “character (with a “c” in the middle).” It is from the Greek word “charasso,” which means “to cut, scratch, or mark.”

- Sometimes the word is translated “express image” or “exact imprint.” It refers to the impression that was made by a stamp or a die. It was *originally* used for the tool that was used to make the imprint, but it became a word used for the impression itself.

- But in this context it means that Jesus Christ is the exact reproduction of God. As John MacArthur puts it, “He is the perfect, personal imprint of God in time and space.”

- Col. 1:15 puts it this way, “He is the image of the invisible God...” There the word is “eikon” but it has the same essential meaning. “Eikon” means a precise copy, an exact reproduction.

- Although God the Father is “invisible,” we have a reproduction of His character in Jesus Christ. We have an impress of His essential being. We have an image of His very nature.

- This means that the Son is exactly like the Father. When He said, “I and My Father are one,” (John 10:30) that is absolutely true. They are one in essence and nature. All the attributes of the Son are the attributes of the Father (and vice versa).

- The Jehovah’s Witnesses say that He is one in purpose, but *not* in essence. The Jehovah’s Witnesses are wrong. *Not only* is Jesus the manifestation of God to men, He is God in *essence* and in *substance*.

- These terms are intentionally used by the author of Hebrews to describe the Son’s relationship to the divine nature. They clearly demonstrate that the Son is uniquely qualified to be the final revelation of God – because He is fully God. (Pause) Then we see:

V. THE UNIQUENESS OF HIS ADMINISTRATION (v. 3c)

- Look with me at the next part of v. 3, "...and upholds all things by the word of His power." Jesus Christ *not only made* all things, and will ultimately *inherit* all things, but He also holds them all together in the meantime.

- The Greek word for "upholds" means "to support or to maintain." But the important thing to note, is that it is in the present tense. This is something that is continual action. In other words, everything in this universe is continually sustained (right now) by Jesus Christ.

- Col. 1:17 says, "...in Him all things hold together." The KJV has the word "consist." And it is interesting, that this is where we get our English word for "glue." He is the glue that keeps the universe from coming apart.

- Someone once said that if Jesus ever stopped holding the universe together (for even one second) the whole thing would come unglued. J. Vernon McGee once said, "That little baby Jesus lying helplessly on the bosom of Mary in Bethlehem could have spoken this universe out of existence."

- Listen, can you imagine what would happen if Jesus relinquished His sustaining power over the laws of this universe? We would *not* survive. If the power of gravity

was suspended for just a moment we would fall right off the earth.

- But He continually holds it all together. And *how* does He hold it together? Effortlessly – by the word of His power. It is the very same power that was exercised in the creation of the world. The Bible tells us, that in the beginning, God spoke, and the worlds were created out of nothing.

- I don't know if you have ever stopped to think about how much power this requires, but it take so much energy to split an atom, that if you google it you won't even understand what you read – so just imagine how much power it takes to hold those atoms together!

- It is this same power that upholds all things. But this word for "upholds" is *not* the idea of carrying a dead weight – instead it is the concept of moving history forward (toward its intended goal).

- This is *not* the idea of the Son of God carrying the world like the mighty Atlas (of Greek mythology), but rather the dynamic progression of the creation through His governmental administration.

- Now folks, what this means is that we can absolute confidence that He is moving history forward to accomplish His great purposes. We don't have to fret about anything that happens in this world. He is

upholding it all, and He is moving it forward to accomplish His will.

- So the question is: “With such phenomenal power manifest in His very word, why would anyone (even for a moment) question the outcome of his faith?” Just think about it – we are saved by His power, and we are kept by His power. We are supplied by His power, and we are enabled by His power. What a tremendous comfort this is! What a joy it is to have Him as the “glue” in our lives!

- Listen, do you know why so many lives are falling apart? It is because they do *not* have Jesus Christ at the center. ILL. – One man told another man, “I am the captain of my own fate.” The second man said, “I hate to tell you this, but your ship is sinking!”

- This is the application of this truth. Your life will come apart, your business will come apart, your family will come apart – unless you have Jesus as the “glue.” He holds the universe together and He desires to your life together too. A life that is *not* sustained by Christ is a life of chaos, but a life that is held together by Christ is a life of abundance.

- And we who are believers in Jesus Christ know that He will carry us all the way through to the end. The One who upholds the universe also sustains our salvation to the end.

- Paul wrote (in Phil. 1:6), “*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*” He upholds the world and He upholds our salvation. We’re *not* the ones who keep ourselves saved. He is the One who does that. And in the same way that He upholds all things, so He sustains our salvation all the way to glorification.

- So we see the uniqueness of His appointment, His agency, His appearance, His attributes, His administration...sixthly we see:

VI. THE UNIQUENESS OF HIS ATONEMENT (v. 3d)

- Going on in v. 3 it says, “When He had made purification of sins...” We’re going to see a large section in this book on that theme. The significance of this phrase is enormous!

- In the church we get so used to the themes of the gospel that we often lose sight of how incredibly awesome the atoning work of Christ really is.

- But as we are going to see in this book, Jesus Christ atoned for our sins once and for all. He was *not only* the great high priest but also the perfect sacrifice. And unlike the priests in the OT dispensation, He perfectly atoned for sins forever. The word that is used for “purification” (there) is “katharismos” and it means “purging, expiation, or cleansing.”

- Of course, the Bible declares that all men are sinners, and that the wages of our sin is eternal death. We cannot save ourselves, but Christ became our substitute on the cross. He died the death we deserve and paid the penalty for our sin on the cross of Calvary. And by faith His atonement can become the complete purification for our sin.

- And for those of who have experienced this atonement and purification by faith, this is His greatest work. Yes, it was wonderful when He created the world. Yes, it is great to know that He will inherit all things, and that He sustains the world by the word of His power – but the greatest thing is to know that we have been completely cleansed from all our iniquities.

- His greatest work is the purging of sin. As we will read in 7:27, “[He] does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the *sins* of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.”

- The Lord Jesus, unlike those priests in the OT, offered Himself up as the sacrifice for sins. Of course, in the OT the priests were having to constantly make sacrifices for the sins of the people. There was a continual flow of blood from these sacrifices, but even that was *not* enough.

- But what we will learn in this book, is that Jesus Christ made one sacrifice for all time. His sacrifice was a perfect

sacrifice, and it was totally sufficient for our salvation. He dealt with our sin problem once and for all. He went to the cross and died a sacrificial death in our place, to pay the penalty for our sins, and those who believe in Him as Savior and Lord are fully cleansed by that sacrifice.

- The Bible says, “the blood of Jesus...cleanses us from all sin.” (That’s 1 John 1:7) His blood became the atonement, the covering for the sins of all those who belong to Him.

- As we will read in 9:26, “...now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” When Jesus cried out from the cross, “It is finished,” that was a divine declaration of the total sufficiency of His atoning work. “Lifted up was He to die, It is finished was His cry, Now in heaven exalted high, Hallelujah, what a Savior!”

- What a tremendous comfort this must have been to the original hearers of this message! In the OT countless sacrifices had to be made, and even then they could never fully atone for sins. But the reality is, that Jesus Christ has fully atoned for all our sins, once and for all.

- Oh, but please understand, that only applies to those who have put their faith and trust in Him for that atonement. In the same way that the Israelites had to apply the blood of the paschal lamb to their doorposts to be protected from the death angel, only those who have

applied the blood of Christ to their hearts through saving faith are purified by Christ.

- And listen, this act of purification makes Christ completely unique. No other religious leader on the face of this earth can say, “I took away sin,” but Jesus did. There is no other One who can do this. Only Jesus Christ, the perfect Lamb of God, can ever atone for sin.

- And there’s something else here. The Catholic church teaches the doctrine of purgatory, but I want you to know, when I die I am *not* going to go to purgatory because my sins have been perfectly purged by Jesus Christ! J. Vernon McGee said, “This is the only kind of purgatory mentioned in the Bible.”

- There is no need for purgatory (for those who are in Christ Jesus) because His purging of our sins was completely sufficient. “There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel’s veins, and [all] sinners plunged beneath that flood lose ALL their guilty stains.”

- And think about what this tells us concerning the nature of God. When we consider what God in sending His Son to atone for our sins, we learn that He is *not only* a holy God that must judge sin, but that He is a merciful and loving God that has provided a solution for our sin. Well, this leads us (finally) to:

VII. THE UNIQUENESS OF HIS AUTHORITY (v. 3e)

- Look at the last part of v. 3, “He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...” Of course, this points to His ascension, His exaltation, and His authority. The right hand was the symbol of authority, and therefore this is pointing to His divine authority.

- There is an allusion (here) to Ps. 110:1, which says, “The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.’” This is God the Father speaking to God the Son. And the Bible makes it clear that the Son is now seated at the right hand of God the Father (in the seat of divine authority).

- In fact, this announcement of the exaltation of Christ serves as (kind of) a structural framework for this entire book. It is going to be cited again in v. 13 of this chapter, and will be alluded to in 8:1, 10:12, and 12:2.

- And we know that Jesus’ ascension was an essential and regular element in the preaching of the early church. We find it often in the Book of Acts, as well as in several of the epistles of Paul. And all that goes back to the Jewish understanding of Ps. 110:1.

- And when Jesus claimed these words as being fulfilled in Him, the Jews understood very clearly what He was saying. In Matt. 26:64, Jesus was before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, and He proclaimed, ‘You have said it *yourself*; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of

Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.””

- For Jesus to tell them that He would soon be “sitting at the right hand of Power” was a clear and undeniable claim of His messiahship. Only the Lord’s Messiah could claim this.

- In fact, in the Gospel of Luke it is even more clearly denunciated. In Luke 20:41-44 we read, “And He said to them, ‘How *is it that* they say the Christ is David’s son?’ For David himself says in the book of Psalms, ‘The Lord said to my LORD, “Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.”’” (There it is. There is Ps. 110:1) (And then he goes on to ask) David therefore calls Him ‘Lord,’ and how is He his son?”

- Of course, the point (here) is that Ps. 110:1 cannot possibly be pointing to a physical son of David. It was (instead) pointing to the Lord’s Messiah – and Jesus is clearly claiming to be that Messiah.

- In Mark 12:36 we are told that David said this inspired by the HS. And then Paul came along and affirmed the same truth, but in different language. For example, he wrote in Eph. 4:10, “He who descended [speaking of the incarnation] is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.”

- He wrote in Phil. 2:9, “Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is

above every name...” The exaltation of Christ was God’s mighty act of raising Him on high, to a position of unparalleled honor and universal authority. Paul goes on to say that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow.

- These two declarations – that the Son of God has made purification for sins and that He is enthroned at the place of honor and power – are the pillars of biblical Christology.

- Oh, but there is something else to note (in the last part of v. 3) that is very important. The fact that Jesus “sat down” indicates that His work of atonement was a finished work.

- As you probably know, the priests in the temple (in the OT) never “sat down” because their work was never done. There was no furniture in the Tabernacle (or the Temple) because the sacrifices were having to be offered continuously.

- But the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ offered a perfect and final sacrifice. His sacrifice was sufficient to completely atone for all sin for all time. Therefore He was able to “sit down.”

- Jesus offered one perfect sacrifice and then proclaimed “It is finished.” After that He went and sat down with the Father. What could *not* be accomplished through the offering of all those countless sacrifices in the OT era was fully accomplished by the Son of God.

- This is why the mass is so blasphemous. It is a re-sacrificing of Christ – but that is totally unnecessary. His sacrifice was perfect and it was absolutely sufficient. There is never a reason for another.

- Now, we're going to see this again, because this is a major theme of this book. This will be explained clearly in 10:11-14. Turn there for a moment. Here's what it says, "And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet."

- He's waiting for the fulfillment of Ps. 110:1. Go on to v. 14, "For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified." His offering was perfect and complete.

- In the same way that you cannot add to the complete revelation of God in Scripture, so you can never add to the sufficiency of Christ's perfect sacrifice for sin.

- And having perfectly and fully completed His work of atonement, the Son of God has been exalted and enthroned at the right hand of God the Father.

- John MacArthur explains that this means at least four things: (1.) He sat down as a sign of honor. He has been given a name that is above every name. (2.) He sat down as a sign of authority. "All authority has been given to [Him] in heaven and on earth." (Matt. 28:18) "[He] is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him." (1 Peter 3:22) (3.) He sat down to rest (in the sense that His work was done). This would be in the same way that God the Father rested on the seventh day after creation. (4.) He sat down to intercede for us. Rom. 8:34 says, "Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us."

- Oh, but there is something else! When Jesus "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" He took with Him a glory that He did *not* have before. He took with Him the nail prints in His hands and feet, and the wound in His side. He took with Him the marks of His atonement.

- One author wrote, "There is something in heaven today that was not there 2500 years ago or in eternity past, because in the glory now is the man with nail-pierced hands and the prints of nails in His feet and a spear wound in His side. Even in His glorified body they are there, and when we see Him, we shall know Him by [these marks]."

- These will be eternal reminders of His sacrificial death on our behalf. Forever we will be reminded of what it took to atone for our sins.

- In closing, I love how Ron Phillips describes his atoning work. He said, “Jesus Christ did not stay in the grave. From creation He marched to Calvary. From Calvary, our conquering Christ marched through the war torn world of sin and took its worst on the cross. After receiving the death blow of Calvary, He marched on into the battlements of death and hell. There He rendered helpless the forces of darkness, and marched forth victorious and triumphant over them.”

[But] Jesus’ march was *not* finished. He marches up through the clouds of the air while demons bow in wonder. Up He ascends through the galaxies and stars as they glorify Him. The gates of pearl swing open for the *Pearl of great price*. The angels of glory shout their welcome as Christ marches on to the throne. There at the Father’s right hand a throne is waiting. The Father shouts across the ages as He sees His pierced Son – “THIS IS MY BELOVED SON IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED.”

- This seven-fold declaration of the superiority of the Son of God confirms His uniqueness as the one and only mediator between God and man. He is the *Prophet* through whom God has spoken His final word. He is the *Priest* who has accomplished a perfect work of cleansing

for his people – and He is the *King* who sits enthroned at the right hand of the Father on high.

- The question is: “Do you know Him as your Lord and Savior?”

- MAKE APPEAL

- PRAYER