

HEBREWS

Message 4

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Reading: Hebrews 12:1-3

INTRO: We are in the first sentence of Hebrews, which I have called a majestic sentence. The writer does an amazing thing. He has opened up a subject by talking about something with which these discouraged Hebrew believers will agree, which is the truth that God spoke to the fathers in time past, through the prophets. Here we have the OT Scriptures. He then makes a turn to the second way in which God spoke, and that is that He spoke to us in these last days through His Son.

And then he begins to describe the Son. First, he tells them what position God has placed Him in; He has appointed Him heir of all things. Then he reminds them that this Son, through whom He now speaks is the One through whom God created the universe. He is exalting the Son, and rightly so.

And before He tells us what this Son has done, He describes Him with these words: He is the one who is the brightness of God's glory! Try to explain that! But not only that, this Son is the express image of the Person of God! And even then, he is not done. We did not have time for this last point in the previous message and we'll take it up this morning.

I confess as I studied this sentence, I had a very difficult time describing in outline form what the writer is saying. But the descriptions of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the manner of wording, and the way the writer keeps from mentioning what he is wanting to get to until the very last of the sentence have challenged me to my limits. I hope that in some way what is locked in this sentence will come through to the listeners.

So the preview the writer gives of the Son by describing Him is a warmup to that which we will be told the Son did. The first way in which He is described is that He is the brightness of God's glory.

b) What the Son did (Cont'd)

-The express image of God's Person

We go on then to the second description of Jesus Christ. He is not only the brightness

of God's glory, according to the translation of the NKJV He is the express image of God's person! Here, descriptive words fail me. Listen to these translations as they grapple with these words:

Darby, Christ is "the expression of His (God's) substance."

ESV, Christ is "the exact imprint of His nature."

Young's, Christ is "the impress of His subsistence."

Weymouth: Christ is "the exact representation of His being,"

What is the meaning of this phrase the NKJV translates as, "the express image of His Person"? Well, translations must translate in a few brief words. In preaching, one has opportunity to expand those words. When I looked up the original word translated 'express image' I learned what, was a new word to me in the original language. I had never noticed it before, and maybe that is because it occurs only this one time in the NT. But I recognized it immediately, as I think you will as well. Let me transliterate it: Karakter. Here is how it is said in PD, Karakta. Here is how it is said in English, how is it said? Yes, character!

Oh, what a word is this in this connection! Here is what the onlinebible says of this word:

1) the instrument used for engraving or carving

2) the mark stamped upon that instrument or wrought out on it

2a) a mark or figure burned in (**Le 13:28**) or stamped on, an impression

2b) the exact expression (the image) of any person or thing, marked likeness, precise reproduction in every respect, i.e facsimile

Jesus Christ is a facsimile of God. What is that? An exact copy. Many years ago I worked in the forest and when we ran out of timber my dad would apply for a timber sale. If he got it he would get a hammer like thing from the forestry. It had a number that protruded off the bottom of it. It was a rather heavy hammer. And when we would send wood to the sawmill, we had to stamp the logs with this hammer. That identified from whom it came. It left the exact same imprint on every log it was used on. That is the idea here.

Now note the writer says Jesus Christ is the character, the impression, or the exact expression, the marked likeness, the precise reproduction in every respect, the express image, the facsimile of God! That is why He said to Philip, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father."

Then note further that it says He is the express image or character of God's person. Oh how translators struggle here, and no wonder. It is almost impossible to describe this with many words, never mind translating it in a few words!

Sometimes we see a child or young person and without being told, we know whose child that is. We say, "He is just like his dad." Or, "She is just like her mother." But no human being can ever be the express image of the mom or dad because there is a mixture of two in the one. Learn to know them closely, and you will find the differences. No person can ever be the express image of one parent or the other because this person is a mixture of two.

But think of this now, Jesus Christ was fathered by God the Holy Spirit; and mothered by Mary, a human being. How could He be the express image of God? This subject became a huge issue in the early church as they struggled to understand both the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ. But here is what we must remember; Jesus Christ is not 50% human and 50% divine. He was 100% human and 100% divine! How can that be? Well, great is the mystery of godliness!

Think of this now, if God took on a human body, and He was God in the flesh, how would He live? Well, read the four Gospels, and you will understand how He would live. Jesus said to Philip, "Have you been so long with Me and you say, 'Show us the Father?'"

Now let me ask this; if He had a human mother how did He not carry the sin nature of His mother? Well, that is why Jesus must be born of a woman. I believe it is because the sin nature is not passed down through the woman, but through the man. Sin passed to all mankind through one man, not through one woman. So He could be born of a woman, and not have a sin nature.

So in the very first prophecy of a Redeemer, we find that He is to come through a woman. Genesis 3:15 says:

*15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."*

So Jesus was born of a human mother, and yet He was the express image of God.

Note again the translations I gave earlier and I'll emphasize another word.

Darby, Christ was, "the expression of His **substance.**"

ESV, Christ was the "exact imprint of His **nature.**"

Young's, Christ was "the impress of His **subsistence.**"

Weymouth: Christ was, "the exact representation of His **being,**"

Let me add the NKJV: Christ was the "express image of His **Person.**"

What is the right word: substance, nature, subsistence, being, or Person? Or is it all of them put together? The word translated "person" or "substance" or "nature" or "subsistence" or His "being" is literally, that which stands underneath, or that which is the foundation. It is the word *hypostasis*. The onlinebible gives one of the meanings as: *the substantial quality, nature, of a person or thing*. Well, what is Jesus the express image of? He is the express image of the substantial quality, or nature of God. So the NKJV calls says He was the express image of God's Person. The foundation of God, that which He is by His very nature, is what Jesus is the express image of. So, we might say Jesus Christ is the express image of all of what God is! When you see Christ, you see God.

So Jesus said to Philip, "Philip, have you been with me this long, and you say, 'Show us the Father?' He who has seen Me has seen the Father!"

I remind you that in these descriptions we simply have a preamble to what Jesus Christ did. So this section describes the Son, before it tells us what He did. Jesus Christ is the brightness of God's glory; the express image of all God is; and now the last description is that He is the One

who upholds all things by the word of His power!

Well, what does that mean? The idea of the word "upholds" is that of bearing up. To bear something up takes constant energy. You uphold it. You bear it up.

So look at this pen. As long as I hold it up, it stays up. But in order for it to stay up I have to keep holding it up. As soon as I don't hold it up, down it goes. The verb in our text is active. The Lord Jesus Christ is constantly upholding, how many things? All things! Well, do all things have to be held up? Have you ever noticed the words of Job 26:7 when He says of God:

*7 He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing.*

You talk about scientific truths! But notice the last one, "He hangs the earth on nothing!" You say, "Well, it just stays there by itself!" But it doesn't! Something or someone keeps it in place!

Now you see, today they say we have global warming. I ask you, does man think he can control the climate? In science there is something called the Higg's boson. How many of you have heard of it? It is sometimes called the God particle. I think it got that name through a scientist who got frustrated because he couldn't figure out what holds all things together. The name he gave this particle is not a good name and it became known as the God particle.

When I went to school I was supposed to learn French. My last report card from my French teacher said, "Has been doing no work at all." I am sorry to say that now. But what I can add to that is that I am not a scientist at all. But I have heard

scientists do not know what holds everything together.

In checking this on the internet one article asked: "What did Stephen Hawking say about the God particle?" Listen to this clip of an article:

"The elusive 'God particle' discovered by scientists in 2012 has the potential to destroy the universe, famed British physicist Stephen Hawking has warned. According to Hawking... at very high energy levels **the Higgs boson**, which gives shape and size to everything that exists, could become unstable."

That is enough to scare any scientist! Well, if it became unstable, what could happen? Well, everything could just fly apart. Now, I don't know anything about science or the Higgs boson, but what I can tell you is that which holds everything together is not a "what" it is a "who." Turn to Colossians 1. It speaks of Jesus Christ in a very interesting manner. We'll read verses 15-17:

*15 He (i.e. Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*

*16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.*

*17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*

In Jesus Christ all things consist. The word translated to *consist* is to *stand together* or to *be held together*. In Christ, all things are held together. He bears all things up and He holds it all together. Oh,

how dependent we are on Jesus Christ! This world talks about controlling global warming. We're fortunate man wasn't around in the so-called ice ages. This planet might never have warmed up. Omniscient Google says the Ice Ages began about 2.4 million years ago and lasted until 11,500 years ago.

So I checked this same omniscient source as to when humans first appeared on earth, and it said it was around two million years ago. But listen to what it said:

*The first humans emerged in Africa **around two million years ago**, long before the modern humans known as *Homo sapiens* appeared on the same continent. Apr 1, 2021*

Well, I didn't know humans existed before modern humans existed. So I checked when this latest creature came into being, and that was only 300,000 years ago. It's a good thing they weren't around 2.4 million years ago. They might have gotten concerned about global warming and we would still be in the cold. I'm joking, of course. So are so called scientists, they just don't know it. Here is what I am telling you; the Lord Jesus holds all things together. God knew what man could and would do before He created man. Don't worry about global warming. I am not saying, don't be careful with God's creation. I am saying do not fear what ungodly people fear.

And so we now ask, how does Jesus Christ hold all things together? Look at the text. It is by the word of His power. It is by the speech or sayings of His power, or His *dunamis*. The word for word here is not the *logos*, it is the *rheema* of His power. Let me quote from my notes on Ephesians 6:

"The significance of *rhema* (as distinct from *logos*) is exemplified in the

injunction to take "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," Eph. 6:17; here the reference is not to the whole Bible as such, but to the individual scripture which the Spirit brings to our remembrance for use in time of need, a prerequisite being the regular storing of the mind with Scripture" (683).

When I was young, though most were using machinery to skid logs, we sometimes still used horses. Horses were often trained so that they would be sent into the bush without anyone riding or leading them. They would go to the right place. There someone would take them and hook them up to a log and he would send the horse off again. And when the horse came to the landing place, someone else would instruct them where to go by saying, "gee." This meant turn right. Or "haw" and this meant turn left. And when it was at the right place the landing man would say, "woa." He would unhook the log and send the horse back. They did it all by a saying, a rheema.

Now the one instructing the horse does so by the authority of his word. Jesus Christ upholds all things by the word of His power. You see, we say God is omnipotent. That means He is all-powerful. 1 Timothy 6:15 says of Jesus Christ that He is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

What is someone who is potentate? Here is the word of our text, power. A potentate is powerful. It is *dunamis*, ability with might. Here is what the scientists call "the God particle." He is the One that holds all things together by the word of His power. By Him all things consist. He upholds all things.

In this present so-called pandemic, those who are the worst off are those driven by

fear. Some in our world are driven by the fear of overpopulation. That is a sinful fear. By the way, let me add something here. According to the WHO in 2021 3.5 million died globally from covid. In the same year 42.6 million died from abortion. Abortion has been the leading cause of death for several years.

Then others are, and yet others will be driven to fear through so called global warming and they will give in to irrational things. Here is our encouragement from this text: Jesus Christ is the one who upholds all things by the word of His power. In Him all things consist. If man can change the Lord Jesus Christ, then and only then do we have reason to fear.

But we do not need to fear that God will ever change. Why not? Well, for that we have another very important doctrine: He is immutable. You can't change Him! He is the same, today, yesterday and forever. He cannot and will not ever change! He holds all things together!

So, note that the Lord Jesus Christ's sayings have power. They have ability. Whatever He says, happens. He bears up all things by the word of His power.

Let me ask you, are you discouraged today? Are you fearful of something? Read this sentence in Hebrews. Let it sink in, and then put your trust in Him.

So, what we have so far in our text is a picture of who God's Son is. He is the heir of all things. He is the one through whom God created all things. He is the brightness of God's glory. He is the express image of God's person. And He is the One who upholds all things by the word of His power.

- When He sat down

Our text will now further tell us when Jesus Christ sat down. Let me remind us that the one great thing God did after He created the universe as set out by our passage is that He spoke. He spoke in times past, and He spoke in these last days. The one great work Jesus Christ did before He sat down in heaven at the right hand of the Majesty on High was, He purged our sins! Look at the words of verses 3-4 and the main part of these verses is, "who sat down." The One who sat down was the brightness of God's glory. He was the express image of His Person. He was the One who upholds all things by the word of His power.

What we have next in the order of the sentence is when He sat down. When was it? It was when He had by Himself purged our sins! Man's one great problem, from Adam and Eve on is sin. It is this that separates man from God. It is this that sends the lost to hell. It is this that is the one main issue. It is this that is my main problem in life. It is this that is your main problem in life.

After Jesus Christ came down to earth and before He ascended back to heaven He accomplished the one great thing mentioned here. So, we will now see what he accomplished while He was on earth. It is usually held that the Lord Jesus ministered about 3 years. I believe it is about 2 years. In those years He accomplished something so big we cannot entirely comprehend it. He purged our sins!

We speak of the Gospel. That is the good news. Well here is the Gospel, "when He had purged our sins!" So we must ask, just what does it mean, to purge our sins? The word translated "purged" is the word *katharos*.

It is something that is clean, or pure, or free from mixture of anything else. It is to be without spot, to be blameless, or without blemish. Jesus came to cleanse us!

You see, there are actions that are not clean. He came to cleanse us from those. There are thoughts that are not clean. He came to cleanse us from those. By way of warning, the internet is saturated with uncleanness. Jesus Christ came to cleanse us from all uncleanness. There is language that is not clean, there is music that is not clean; there are all kinds of things that are not clean, that is they are morally unclean. And He came to cleanse us. He came to make us morally clean!

In our present time we are reminded in almost every place to be clean. There is hand cleaner everywhere. There are masks almost everywhere, for fear our breath is not clean. And yet filthy words are freely spoken without fear of defiling others. There are filthy pictures displayed all over, including in grocery stores, without fear of infecting others. Let it be an uncleanness to our souls, and there is no fear. When it is an uncleanness to our health, now fear drives us. When we have a sniffle, we fly to the doctor. I am not promoting uncleanness. I am promoting a greater concern over moral uncleanness than fear of physical uncleanness.

Jesus said this in Matthew 10:28:

*28 "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Now I am not promoting uncleanliness, but the very worst thing any sickness can do to us is kill the body. What a little bit of moral sickness can do to us is destroy both

soul and body in hell! And the One who is able to destroy both soul and body, and the One who will, is God Almighty! But He loved us to such an extent that He gave His only begotten Son to purge us or cleanse us from our moral defilement, a defilement we all have carried.

This is the one we are to fear. This past week I was reading in Isaiah. Listen to the last part of Isaiah 29:13 as he speaks of a backslidden nation:

*13 Therefore the Lord said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men,*

Israel's teachers did not take their doctrine of the fear of God from the Scriptures, they taught it by doctrines developed in humanism.

Eight times the Bible says, "The Fear of the Lord is..." and then it tells us what it is. Listen to these:

*Ps 19:9 The fear of the LORD is clean*

*Ps 111:10 & Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom*

*Pr 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,*

*Pr 8:13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil*

*Pr 14:27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,*

*Pr 15:33 The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom,*

*Isa 33:6 The fear of the LORD is His treasure.*

We may ask ourselves, do we fear Him? The danger of the OSAS position is that it wants to remove the fear of the Lord. How do I know if I fear God? I can tell by how much moral uncleanness I allow.

Now let me translate our verse literally, "...when by Himself the clean making One of the sins of us sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high..." Jesus Christ is *the clean making One* of the sins of us!

Let me read verse 3 again now:

*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*

It will go on to say that after He had purged our sins He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Think now of this One the writer has described. He is the One who spoke to us in these last days. He is the heir of all things. God made the worlds through Him. He is the brightness of God's glory. He is the express image of God's Person. He upholds all things by the word of His power. He is the clean making one of the sins of us! Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

When He died on the cross, He cleansed us from our sins. And so our text says that when He had by Himself purged us from our sins He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high! Here was the reason He came down to live among sinful people.

Now I must add this. It is true that when Jesus died, was buried, and then resurrected He had purged us from our sins. But that purging, that cleansing is never

applied to me until I repent from my sins, my uncleanness, and turn to Him in faith.

Now I want you to notice further that He purged us from our sins by Himself. He had no help in the matter. His own God turned His back on Him. When the darkness set in and He was separated from His loving Father by the sin He had taken in by drinking from that poisonous cup in the garden, it turned dark. His Father turned His back on that filthy, sin-laden form on the cross, writhing in pain, seeking to get another breath. His disciples were gone. His God was gone. He purged our sins by Himself! Sinful man had spit on Him. They had mocked Him. They had put a purple robe on Him. They had put a crown of thorns on Him. They had plucked His beard. They had scorned Him. They said, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." He purged us from our sins by Himself, forsaken by God and by man. He died forsaken.

So, our text says, "when He had by Himself purged our sins." Who can preach these four verses with words that do Him justice? Well, a faithful convert, Nicodemus by name, asked for His body, and lovingly laid it to rest in his own tomb.

Oh, but it is not the end of the story. Note what our text says. When He had by Himself purged us from our sins He sat down at the right hand of God! You see, to put all of what this writer does in one verse, you have to edit what you say. And between the time He purged us from our sins and when He sat down in glory, a lot of things happened.

You can read the Gospels, how they discovered the empty tomb. Mary Magdalene, a woman out of whom Jesus had cast seven demons was the first to see Him. She came to the tomb, broken hearted, and thought

the Man she saw there was the gardener. And when Jesus said, "Mary!" she turned and said, "Rabboni!"

I ask you, have you heard Him say your name? Oh, there is so much more. Then 40 days later, with His disciples with Him, He stood on the Mount of Olives and His feet began to lift off the earth and He went up, and up, until they could not see Him any more. He left this first world, passed through the second, and entered the third. And there He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high!

The second Person of the triune God came to earth in human form. He bore the punishment due every sinful human being. He made salvation available to all mankind, and then He ascended back to heaven. He purged our sins by Himself.

And so the last part of this verse says that He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high! His work on earth was done. In all this description, there is only one thing the writer mentions that Jesus did on earth. He purged our sins.

He mentions no miracles. He mentions nothing else at all. And because of this one thing that He did, He was exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high. He had dealt with sin. He had defeated Satan. What was accomplished on the cross? This is the most extraordinary, astounding thing that ever happened. It happened at the cross. He looked like just any other man. He was a man like the others. But He was also the Son of God. He had lived in poverty. He had no place to call His own. When they took Him in the garden of Gethsemane, they tied Him up. When He carried the cross, weak from lack of sleep and loss of blood, He staggers carrying the

cross. Then they hang him between two thieves.

And then, behold, the veil in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And the earth quaked. And the rocks were split. And some graves were opened. And then He died, and they buried Him.

But now He sits on the throne of the universe. There is nothing more shameful than hanging on a tree and there is no greater glory than we see in this passage. He is what the sun's rays are to the sun. He is the brightness of God's glory. He is the express image of God Himself.

Now I want us to notice something else. He did not come to teach us how to live right so that we could go to heaven. He came to purge us from our sins. The stain of sin has to be removed. We need our guilty consciences cleansed by the removal of sin. And when sin has been removed, now we need to be taught how to deal with sin and become righteous in actual life.

Now notice that He purged "our" sins. He purged my sins! He purged your sins. John the Baptist said He takes away the sin of the world. It is a sin to say He died only for the elect. It is heresy. What a shame to say that, when in fact it says He takes away the sin of the world. True, it is only applied to those who repent and believe, but that is open to all mankind!

CONCL: In this letter, the writer is first showing the Hebrew Christians who Jesus Christ is. He is the One to whom God spoke after He had spoken through the prophets of old. By the time he gets to angels, which is what he is seeking to explain to them, he has exalted Jesus Christ to such an extent as to make angels be what they are in comparison to the created to the Creator.

God spoke through Jesus Christ. He appointed Him heir of all things. He created the universe through Him. He is the

brightness of God's glory. He is the express image of His Person. He upholds all things. Look at the universe. Look at earth and all the creatures on it, and Jesus Christ upholds it all.

And last we saw that He purged our sins by Himself. The world turned dark. The sun refused to shine on Him, but it was during daylight hours. God refused to look at Him, sin laden, disgusting creature. And the nails held His body to the cross. He was scum to the world. And He purged our sins by Himself.

We are approaching a day when this world will walk all unsuspectingly into the tribulation. It will enter when man says he has achieved peace and safety, and then all hell will break loose on earth. The Bible speaks of this time over and over again. I would not be surprised if it speaks of this time more than the return of Christ.

And when that time has run its course, and sinful man refuses to repent, the Lord Jesus Christ is going to do something else by Himself. Turn to Isaiah 62. It speaks of the time when the Lord Jesus comes down from heaven on the white horse, and the Church is with Him. And on earth, the antichrist has arrayed his armies to fight Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ will tackle him and all the lost who are alive and He will fight them by Himself. We begin in verse 1:

*1 Who is this who comes from Edom, With dyed garments from Bozrah, This One who is glorious in His apparel, Traveling in the greatness of His strength?*

Here is a sight so marvelous the question is raised by the prophet? Who is this one who is coming, who is glorious in His apparel. And the coming One answers like this:

*– "I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save."*

He saved man from His sins by dying for man. Now He comes to save the living at the end of the tribulation. And the prophet asks:

*2 Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?*

The prophet says, "Oh my, but your garments are all blood splattered, like someone who treads the winepress. Why is your clothing so sprinkled with blood?" And the answer is:

3 *"I have trodden the winepress alone, And from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, And trampled them in My fury; Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, And I have stained all My robes.*

Why were His garments so blood splattered? The Lord Jesus Christ is trampling the wine press by Himself! He will take care of sinful man by Himself. He will tread them in His anger. When He is done, there are only Christians and professing Christians left. And then He deals with the professing Christians, and they are cast into hell. And then the millennial reign of Christ begins.

Verses 4-6:

4 *For the day of vengeance is in My heart, And the year of My redeemed has come.*

5 *I looked, but there was no one to help, And I wondered That there was no one to uphold; Therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me; And My own fury, it sustained Me.*

6 *I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, Made them drunk in My fury, And brought down their strength to the earth."*

He trampled this winepress alone. There is only one who could die for our sins and deliver us from it. There is only One who can deal with sin in the end, and both, the Lord Jesus has to do all alone. So our clause said, "When He had by Himself purged us from our sins."

May I ask you, are you discouraged today, like these Hebrew Christians were? Are you fearful of the future? We will never go through worse things than Jesus Christ went through. And He, this book of Hebrews tells us, for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despised the shame, and sat down at the right hand of God. Are our eyes fixed on the final goal? Or do we have our eyes on the troubled waters of this world? If so, it is time to refocus.