

“The Radiance of His Glory”
Hebrews 1:1-3
(Preached at Trinity, September 3, 2023)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citation will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In these opening verses the author is setting God before us. The Book opens with “God.” Creation is about what God is doing. Creation reveals the power and majesty of God, but it does not reveal to us God's redemptive purpose. God has revealed His purpose by His Divine revelation. This has come first and progressively through the prophets. But God's fullest revelation of Himself and His redemptive purpose is Jesus Christ.
 2. The author is placing Jesus Christ before us in all His glory. He possesses all of the glory of the Divine essence. He is God.
Hebrews 1:3 NAU - "And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature"
 3. His point is to display Jesus as superior to the prophets. Jesus Christ is the full and total revelation of God. He is superior to the angels. These created beings cannot compare with the eternal Christ.
 4. This passage tells us several glorious truths about Jesus Christ our Lord.
- I. Jesus possess all of the glory of the Godhead.
 - A. As God, Jesus possess all of the attributes of the Divine essence.
 1. Jesus is the greatest of the prophets. The task of the prophets was to declare the Word of God. Jesus Christ IS the Word of God. He is the exact revelation of God.
 2. All that pertains to God pertains to Christ.
Hebrews 1:3 NAU - "the exact representation of His nature"
 3. Jesus is the “exact” representation of God – identical in every way.
 - B. Jesus shines with the radiance of God's glory.
 1. Jesus bears the image of God.
Hebrews 1:3 NAU - " And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature"
Colossians 1:15 NAU - "And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation."
 2. When we speak of Christ as the image of God we are to understand that His is an exact likeness – the same in every way. He shares all of the attributes of God.
 3. The divine glory appears in Christ because Christ is the image of God. All that pertains to God pertains to Christ.
We read of God in our Confession (1689 2:2) – He is “immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, every way infinite, most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute . . .” All of these attributes also apply to Jesus Christ. He is “most loving, gracious, merciful, long-

suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. . . just and terrible in His judgments.

4. If God shines with blinding glory, then Jesus Christ bears that same radiance.

- B. Some have erroneously supposed that in the incarnation Jesus set aside His glory. That He emptied Himself of the radiance and splendor of His Divinity.

Philippians 2:6-7 NAU - "although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men."

1. This is referred to as the Divine kenosis - ἐκένωσε (κενόω)

Is this true? Not according to the Bible.

John 1:14 NAS - "And the Word 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."

2. When looking upon the person of Christ we behold the glory of God in bodily form.

Colossians 2:9 NAU - "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,"

3. God's glory is intrinsic to His being – His essential glory.

- a. This is the glory that is basic to His nature.

- b. God's glory is the essence of His divine being.

It is the manifestation of His Divine attributes.

4. Gazing upon Christ was gazing upon the essence of the Divine being. Although, in His earthly flesh, the fullness of His glory was veiled to our eyes. The problem was our eyes could not bear to look upon His fullness. But there were times that Jesus revealed some of His glory to His disciples and it was stunning. One example was on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Matthew 17:1-2 NAU - "Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. ² And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light."

- C. But the full radiance of the glory of Christ was not revealed until after His exaltation. His radiance now shines in all its glory.

Hebrews 1:3 NAU - "And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,"

1. Paul saw the glory of the risen Christ on the road to Damascus

Acts 9:3-4 NAU - "As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; ⁴ and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

2. Stephen saw it also

Acts 7:55-56 NAU - "But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; ⁵⁶ and he said, "Behold, I see the

heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

3. The Apostle John saw it also
Revelation 1:13-16 NAU - "and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. ¹⁴ His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. ¹⁵ His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. ¹⁶ In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength."
4. And we shall see it.
1 John 3:2 NAU - "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is."

- II. Jesus is the Creator and Sustainer of all things. He is Lord of all and King over all.
Hebrews 1:2 NAU - "through whom also He made the world."
Colossians 1:15-16 NAU - "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created through Him and for Him."
John 1:3 NAU - "All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."
- A. Creation is an expression of the Divine essence. He created all things for His glory – to put Himself on display.
 1. In creation God reveals His plurality
 The Father is God and Creator
 The Son is God and Creator
 The Holy Spirit is God and Creator
 2. Jesus is the focus of creation.
Colossians 1:16 NAU - "all things have been created through Him and for Him."
 3. All things are through Him and for Him.
Romans 11:36 NAU - "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen."
Hebrews 1:2 NAU - "through whom also He made the world."
 - a. We exist for Christ.
 - b. Jesus came to accomplish our redemption and then returned to His place of glory.
Hebrews 1:3 NAU - "When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,"
 - B. All things are upheld and sustained by the power and superintendence of Christ
Hebrews 1:3 NAU - "upholds all things by the word of His power."

1. Jesus is the glue that holds all things together.
2. All matter is comprised within the realm of the microscopic. Each atom is a mass of whirling protons and electrons. What holds the atom together? All things have cohesion in Christ.
3. Our lives are sustained by Jesus Christ. Life exists by His Divine power.
 - a. If Christ suspends His divine hand in sustaining us we all die.
Acts 17:28 NAU - "for in Him we live and move and exist"
 - b. John Davenant – “Every creature, whether earthly or heavenly, visible or invisible, would sink back again into its former nothingness, if the Divine preservation were withdrawn.”¹
4. Jesus is the sustainer of our soul
 - a. Salvation is in Christ alone. He has accomplished our salvation. It is finished!
Hebrews 1:3 NAU - "When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,"
 - b. If Jesus ceased to sustain us we would surely fall away.
His sustaining grace is declared over and over
Romans 8:35 NAU - "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"
John 10:27-38 NAU - "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.²⁹ "My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand.³⁰ "I and the Father are one."
 - c. Herman Witsius (Dutch Reformed Theologian of the 17th Century) – “Those to whom God has freely given faith and holiness, he likewise keeps with such solicitous care, that it is impossible for any true believer totally and finally to fall away from that holiness when once it is begun, and thereby forfeit the salvation appointed for him.”²

III. Jesus is the appointed heir of all things

- A. There is a sense that in His incarnation the glory that was eternally His was granted to Him by virtue of His mediatorial office.
John 17:4-5 NAU - "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.⁵ "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."
 1. Jesus was appointed heir of all things. He was given to be Lord of all.
Philippians 2:9-11 NAU - "For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,¹⁰ so that

¹ Davenant, John, *Colossians, Geneva Series of Commentaries*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009) page 203.

² Witsius, Herman, *The Economy of the Covenants Between God and Man – Vol.2*, (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012) page 294.

at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

2. At the Great Commission Jesus declared:
Matthew 28:18 NAU - "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."
 - a. This isn't speaking of His eternal divine authority but the authority given to Him as Mediator: Prophet, Priest, and King
 - b. Matthew Henry: "As God—man and Mediator, he was appointed by the Father to be the heir of all things, the sovereign Lord of all, the absolute disposer, director, and governor of all persons and of all things."³
- B. The great inheritance of Jesus Christ is authority and ownership over all things.
1. As Prophet, Priest, and King He has the inheritance of His people – those pledged to Him before the world began.
Psalm 2:7-8 NAU - "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. ⁸ 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession."
 - a. Jesus came in His incarnation to save His people from their sins.
 - b. Having fully accomplished His work as our Redeemer Jesus has been raised to sit upon His throne of majesty and glory.
Hebrews 1:3 NAU - "When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."
 2. Jesus has always possessed infinite power, authority, and dominion. But as Mediator of the New Covenant He has purchased the right to all things. He is seated upon the throne that He has purchased with His own blood. He took possession of that which was rightfully His.
Ephesians 1:19-23 NAU - "*These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might ²⁰ which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

³ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2380.

Conclusion:

1. As our Mediator/Redeemer Jesus Christ is the One and Only. He is unique and incomparable. He alone is the Savior of His people.
2. These beleaguered Jewish Christians were being tempted to abandon Christianity and return to Judaism. But Jesus is superior to Judaism. The Judaic promises all point to Jesus. He is the greatest of the prophets. He is the final and ultimate King. He is the final perfection of the priests. There were no seats in the Temple because the priests stood to make continued sacrifices. Their work was never complete because the sin problem was not resolved. But after Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice He sat down because the work was accomplished.
Hebrews 1:3 NAU - "When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high"
3. The writer of Hebrews will continue to hold this before our eyes. Besides Jesus there is none other. If you turn from Him there is none other. You will find yourself without a redeemer. You will perish in your sins.
Hebrews 10:35-36 NAU - "Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised."