

Jesus Is Greater Than the Prophets

Hebrews 1:1-3

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, January 20, 2022

I just want to jump into our sermon this morning by inviting you to open your Bibles to a book that we started studying a few weeks ago, and that is the book of Hebrews. It is the 19th book in the New Testament. If you were to put all the books together and add them up, Hebrews is a 19th out of 27 books that we find in this part of the Bible. And it stands alone among them because it's anonymous. It's the only New Testament book that we don't know the author's name. And as such, there's been a lot of speculations about that if you've read some commentaries on this, you'll know that there's been a lot of guesswork as to who actually did write Hebrews. The Catholic Church said Paul did it. Martin Luther said Apollos did it. John Calvin said Luke wrote it and Tertullian said Barnabas wrote it, but I think Origen was right when he said God alone knows. Because the thought is certainly Pauline. I mean, when you read the book, it sounds like something Paul would have written. But his name's not on it. So the author remains a mystery. But either way, we know where it came from, it came from the mind of God.

If you look in chapter one, it says this:

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. 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, having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

For to which of the angels did He ever say, "You are My Son, today I have begotten You." And again, "I will be a father to Him, and He shall be a Son to Me"? And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, "And let all the angels of God worship Him." And to the angels He says, "Who makes His angels winds, and His ministers a flame of fire." But of the Son, He says, "Your throne, oh God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above Your companions." And, "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but You remain; and they all will become old like a garment, and like a mantle You will roll them up; like a garment they will also be changed. But you are the same, and your years will not come to an end." But to which of the angels has He ever said, "Sit in my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for Your feet"? Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

If you notice, it starts out very differently from just about any other New Testament book because it begins not with the author's name. It doesn't start with the word Paul or James or John. It starts off with one word and that is the word God because He is the author of the book. It says, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions has now spoken in His Son." It doesn't mean a lot for today to say that God has spoken to us anymore because a lot of people just assume that He does. They believe it's a very common thing because you hear people say all the time that the Lord told me this, and the Lord told me that, God said this to me, and

God said that to me in a dream, or a burning in the bosom like the Mormons get. But it wasn't that way in the Old Testament. And people didn't talk like that back then. Because the Jews thought it was a very serious thing to get a word from the Lord, they thought it was a big deal. In fact, it was such a big deal that they would stone you for faking it. They were told to kill you if you made it up.

If you just want to write this verse down, Deuteronomy 18, verse 20 says, "But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in my Name, which I have not commanded him to speak, that prophet should die." It means that Jews were commanded to kill someone who gave a false prophecy, they would line them up against the wall and throw rocks at them until they were dead, or they would put them in a pit and put boulders on top of their head until they killed them. It makes you wonder how different the church would be today if we practice that in Canada; it would look like a big bloodbath in certain parts of the country. But they did that because it was a grave thing to them. Which is also why they were told to have discretion about this. Isaiah eight verse 19, says that when they say to you consult the mediums and spirits don't do it. People should consult their God first. You need to go to the law and the testimony. And that means this is how you can tell someone who's speaking from the Lord, you go to the law and the testimony, because if it matches the Bible, it's from God. If it doesn't, then it doesn't.

But the point is that it was no small thing to speak for the Lord. It could cost you your life if you got it wrong. Which is why the Jews created a special office to deal with this in Israel, called the Office of Prophet or *Nabhi* in Hebrew. The word means "summoned ones" because the prophets were those who were summoned to give God's word to His people, they were set aside to do it. The idea is that God didn't just use anybody for this. You couldn't just speak on his behalf whenever you wanted to, and you got an urge or a feeling, that sort of thing. God had to draw you out from humanity. He had to pick you from all the human race. And as such, they had several qualifications for it. And I'm giving you all this as background for this chapter. But for one thing, you did have to be called to the office, if you wanted to be a prophet, you have to actually be summoned to do it.

And if you want to keep your fingers in the book of Hebrews, and turn back with me to the book of Jeremiah, because Jeremiah tells you about his calling in the first chapter of the book. He tells you about the time the Lord summoned him personally. If you would look in Jeremiah chapter one, starting in verse four, it says, "Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. And before you were born, I consecrated you, and appointed you a prophet to the nations.'" Now, I don't know about you, but I would say that's quite a calling. Because if you notice, it didn't start when Jeremiah was born, it started before that. It didn't begin when he was a baby. The Lord called him from eternity past before he was formed in the womb, to show the eternal nature of this. And as such, the rest of the passage goes on to say in verse six, then I said, Alas, Lord God, Behold, I don't know how to speak because I'm a youth. But the Lord said to me, don't say I'm a youth, because everywhere I send you, you will go in all that I command you, you shall speak, do not be afraid of them, for I am with you. You can tell as you read that Jeremiah was a little hesitant to be a prophet here because he knew what the Jews were like. He was going to be a difficult experience, because he was young and immature, and he feared man, so the Lord says basically that that doesn't matter, Jeremiah, because this is not about you. It's about me. This is not about what you're able to do. This is about what I'm able to do, for I can deliver you to go and preach. You can imagine for the rest of his life, Jeremiah would be battling the feelings of insecurity and anxiety and depression and those types of things. So the Lord gave him this calling to step back and say, I'm bigger than all of that. Don't worry about it.

But every prophet had to have a calling like this, and it leads to a second qualification for the office of Prophet and that is that you had to be purified as well. Not only did the Lord have to call you but he had to set you apart from sin. And you see this in the book of Isaiah. This is another prophet in Israel. And Isaiah tells you about the time the Lord purified him in an unforgettable way. Because in Isaiah six it says, “In the year of King Uzziah’s death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above him, each having six wings, and with two, he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew, and one called out to the other saying, ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.’ And the foundations of the threshold trembled at the voice of him who called out while the temple was filling with smoke, and then I said, ‘Woe is me, for I’m ruined, because I’m a man of unclean lips.’” As you read that, that might sound a little strange to you. But the significance to this is that it happened in the year of King Uzziah’s death and King Uzziah was a good king in Israel. He was one of the best they ever had. So Isaiah would have been heartbroken on that. And as he’s weeping over the king’s death, the Lord gives him a vision of heaven to say, even though Uzziah is dead, I’m still on the throne and, Isaiah, even though your political situation is messed up, I’m bigger than that. And while he’s there, it says that the seraphim are the angels are flying around the throne of God and they are saying, “Holy, Holy, Holy,” which means sacred, sacred, sacred. God is unapproachable to men, which shook Isaiah to the core, because he said, “I’m ruined!”

Now I can’t speak for God. I can’t even come into His presence. And look at what happens in verse six. It says, “Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs, and he touched my mouth with it, and said, ‘Behold, this has touched your lips, and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven.’” The reason the angel touch Isaiah’s lips here is because that’s what he was going to speak with. That’s what he would use to do the prophesying. So the Lord says, I’ve cleansed that for you, Isaiah taking your sins away, so you can be my spokesman. But the Lord did that to purify him for the work, every Prophet went through that, every one of them had to be saved. This was kind of an Old Testament picture of the gospel here.

There is one more qualification for this office. And I want to mention this one quickly, but he had to be humble as well. Prophet had to be called he had to be purified he had to be humble and low to the ground. And you see this in the life of Ezekiel. In Ezekiel chapter one, this is one of the strangest passages in the entire Bible. In chapter one, verse one, it says, “Now it came about in the 30th year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.” And down in verse four, “As I looked, behold, a storm wind was forming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing forth continuously in a bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire. Within it, there were figures resembling for living beings. And this was their appearance: they had human form. Each of them had four faces and four wings.” Now, I’m going to stop there for a minute. We can’t get into all of what he’s seeing here, but many believe this was the same kind of vision Isaiah saw: the vision of heaven and Ezekiel is seeing the angels here. He’s in the land of the Chaldeans or the Babylonians and the 30th year after the exile, which means he’s depressed, he’s discouraged because he’s away from Jerusalem. So God gives him this vision. And if you look down in verse 28, this is his response to this. It says that when I saw it, I fell on my face. In other words, it humbled them. It threw him to the ground, he didn’t see all this and say, Hey, guys, look at me, I’m a prophet now. He didn’t watch all this and say, check this out. I had a vision, I’m going to go on TBN and make a million dollars off of it and sell books. He was terrified. Because it’s no small thing to speak for the living God.

You can turn back to the book of Hebrews now. This is why the Jews didn't have prophets visiting them all the time. They were very rare. In fact, the first time you see someone showing up in the office of prophet is not until Samuel in the days of the judges. That's also why when they showed up, they made a splash; they shook up the nation because the prophets were few and far between. Think about a guy like Elijah, and what kind of impact he had on the country. But I mentioned that to you, because I think it sheds a lot of light. And what the author is saying here in chapter one, when he tells us that God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets (the word fathers there is a reference to the Jews) because the author says, "Don't you see how privileged the Jews were to receive all this? Don't you see how blessed they were?" And not only that, but he says, "In these last days, God has spoken to us in His Son." In other words, you have something far better than the Jews ever had because you have Jesus. And he's greater than the prophets by far. And just to explain that when the author says that God spoke in many portions, that's a Greek word that means at many times, and the idea is that God has spoken through His prophets at various stages throughout history. He did it in bits and pieces, because at one time he spoke to one man, at another time, he spoke through another. As you read the Old Testament, you see that one time He gave us the word through Isaiah, and another time He gave it through Jeremiah, and another time, he gave a word through Ezekiel.

Here in our passage it says He spoke in many ways, which means that He used many different methods of communication in order to do that. Because sometimes He spoke through a sermon, sometimes he spoke through a vision or a dream, or a miracle. But He says that by way of contrast, in these days, God has spoken to you through one thing, and one thing only, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, because He's all God wants to say to you now, He's the final word from heaven. Before the Jews, if you wanted to go to heaven, you would kind of have to compile all the words of the prophets, in order to sort it out. They would have to mix and match the all the teachings of men like Isaiah and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel in order to see what they're saying, which could be confusing at times. But what the author is saying here is you don't have to do that anymore. You just have to listen to Christ. And that's it, you have to pay attention to one thing, and that's the Son of God. In fact, this is something you're going to see a lot in this first chapter, because the author says the reason you can do this is because Jesus is the heir of all things in the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His nature. The reason you only need Him and no one else is because He made purifications for sins, and sat down at the right hand of God because He paid it all.

And to add to this, we'll get into this in the weeks to come, but starting in verse five and going all the way down to verse 13, the author is going to quote from the Old Testament seven times in order to show you that not only did Jesus do all this, but the Old Testament talked about it in advance. He spoke about Christ long ago in passages like Psalm 22 and Psalm 45. So you can't miss it. But the point is that it all goes back to Him now, because Jesus is the full revelation of God.

One poet said this, he said, "Christ for sickness, Christ for health, Christ for poverty, Christ for wealth, Christ for joy, Christ for sorrow, Christ today and Christ tomorrow" because that's what the Christian life is all about. Being a Christian is not about Jesus plus something. It's not about Him plus works, or Him plus efforts, or Him plus the law, or Him plus the ceremonies and sacrifices, and going to church and being a good person and being responsible. It's just about Him. And that's it. So if you know Him, you can be saved. And stop looking for anything else.

This is important to talk about this morning, because as I just mentioned, a lot of people are looking for more from God today, aren't they? They're not satisfied with simply Jesus because they want God to speak to them still another way. Which is why they go to conferences and camps and retreats all the time. That's why they buy books and go online and look for someone to show them how to have dreams and urges and feelings. So they can get more Christians to spend 1000s of dollars. They throw their life savings away on things like prayer rugs, and holy water and special pins that are said to be sent from heaven with a word from God. What the author of Hebrews is saying is that you don't have to do that anymore. That's not necessary because God has spoken to you through His Son. And that's all that you need.

In one of his commentaries on this subject, JC Ryle says that when a man is starving, he isn't picky. So that when he gets a piece of bread, he doesn't hold it up and say, you know, I don't like this because it doesn't have enough butter on it. Or I don't want it because it's not white bread or wheat bread or gluten free, the kind that I like, it's just bread so he eats it. It's the same way with this: you find Jesus Christ displayed in all His glory and all His power and all His might, and like you read right here in this book, you just eat them. And that's it. You just take Him in and stop looking for anything else.

And that's what we're going to talk about this morning with three reasons why Jesus is greater than the prophets. That's our outline for today. And we're going to do this because this is how the book starts out. It begins by showing you the excellencies of Christ. In fact, that's what it's going to talk about all the way through from different angles, showing you how Jesus is greater than every Prophet, Priest and King that ever came before Him; He doesn't even compare because he offers you something that none of them ever could. And that is the bread of life, where they just gave you a taste of the bread, He gives you the whole bread, when they gave you a fragment of what it means to be saved, and just a glimpse, He gives you everything full and free. And this is such a comforting doctrine that some scholars have come up with a term for it which is called our sufficiency in Christ. Which means that in Jesus, all our needs are met. All your sins are once are taken care of, because He's enough for your salvation, sanctification and glorification. Christ is all you need for forgiveness, redemption and atonement. He's all you need for regeneration, conversion, the new birth, battle with sin, fight of faith. He's all you need to be a parent. Christ is all you need to be a husband, a wife because He provides everything for us.

And we're just going to get started talking about that this morning with three reasons why Jesus is greater than the prophets. The first one is because His revelation is greater, which means that unlike the prophets, Jesus gives us a complete word from the Lord. It doesn't come in bits and pieces. It's not fragmentary, with a little here, little there. He gives you the whole thing at once. And if you look in verse one, it says, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets, in many portions, and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son." And I wanted to stop there because this doesn't come across well in English. But this verse begins one long sentence in Greek, that stretches from verse one, all the way down to verse four, without a pause, or without a break. If you count it all up, it contains 93 words in it that actually give you one big thought. And the thought is that God has spoken to us, Yahweh, Jehovah, the Lord of heaven and earth, has talked to simple people like you and me. Apparently this idea excited the author so much that he doesn't give you a greeting here or an introduction. He doesn't really give you his name or tell you who he's writing to, he just starts talking because he just couldn't help himself. He kind of reminds me of the gospel of Mark. It says, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God..." and then he starts telling you stories. It is just like Mark just couldn't help himself, he just had to start talking about Jesus right away. It's the same way here. And what the author says is that God has spoken to us long ago to the prophets in many portions, and that's the Greek word *polymeros*. That's a compound word from *poly* or many

and *meros* or time, it means many times, but literally, the word could be translated many bones because it's a medical term that refers to the parts that make up the human skeleton. The idea is that the authors of the Old Testament were like fragments of bone that make up one big skeleton. There are pieces of knowledge that made one big body of Revelation. So when you put them together, they all made sense. But when you didn't do that they don't. We've been going through the Old Testament together in our Iron Man's Bible study, and the men have said that there are times you're reading something, and you have no idea how that fits in. But when you back up and look at it from a high perspective, it does make sense. That's how God gave us the Old Testament.

It also says the Lord said this in many ways, and that's the Greek word *polytropos*, which could be translated many turns. Because the expression means that the authors of the Old Testament were like roads that took you on twists and turns before they came to their final destination. They were like rivers on a map that took many paths before ending up in the sea. If you think about it, the Old Testament was a very diverse book. It was pretty complicated, came in many shapes and sizes, because it has law books in it and history books in it. It has poetry books, and prophecy books in it that are all written differently. They all have their own styles of expression, which can also be easy to get lost in. I know a lot of Christians personally who make a New Year's resolution read through the Bible, and they abandon it about this time of year because they get into the book of Leviticus and they have no idea what to do with that. What the author here is saying is that God understands that challenge. He knows how difficult it was for us to read all this. So this is what he's done for you. Now, in these last days, it says He's spoken to us in His Son, not in law books, but in His Son. Not in history books or prophecy books or something like Leviticus, but God has done it through Christ. And that's it. You want to know God, now you know Jesus, that's how you do it. You want to understand Him, you understand the Son.

And that phrase "last days" doesn't refer to the last days of eschatology, or end times, it refers to the last days of prophecy or the time when God's word would be finished once and for all. Because with Jesus Christ, this is what happened. After He came and went, and the last apostle died, the word of God was complete the Bible was done. All church history is clear on the fact that after the first century, there were no more books being written. Because it was all fulfilled now as Second Corinthians one verse 20, says, "All the promises are yes and amen in Christ." Jesus started a whole new era in history; He gave us a whole new way to look at the world. Because with Him, God stopped giving new revelation to us because it wasn't needed anymore. He was all God wanted to say. You know, we call it BC and AD: before Christ and in the year of our Lord, but you might as well call it the Old Testament in the New Testament, because it's the same thing. Timeline is the same. Because Jesus came to draw a line in history; He came to stop one dispensation with the Jews and started another one with the church, where the scriptures would be concluded indefinitely. You know, I have a little chart in my Bible that sums this up well, because it has the Old Testament on the left, and the New Testament on the right, and in between them as the cross. And that's a good way to look at it. Because the cross is the centerpiece of the Bible. It's the glue that held it all together, but it's also the line that separated it. It's the bar that distinguish one part from the other. Because before Jesus, everything that was written was leading up to Him. And after Him, everything that was written was looking back. You could also say that before Him everything that was written anticipated His arrival. It was a waiting time; and after Him everything interpreted the arrival, explained it for you. But either way, it was all about Him. Jesus Christ was the watershed moment in human history. Time did not stop with Muhammad. And it didn't stop with Buddha. And it didn't stop with all the gods of Hinduism. And it didn't stop when Frederick Nietzsche walked the earth and taught nihilism and atheism; it stopped with Christ. In fact, Jesus said this Himself at several different times in His ministry because in Luke chapter four it says that after He began His ministry, Jesus went back to his hometown of Nazareth, and He visited the synagogue and read from the scroll of Isaiah.

And He said, "Today, these words have been fulfilled in you're hearing." Now if you think about it, that's quite a thing to say to your hometown. These people knew him since he was a kid. They knew His parents, they knew where He grew up. But He said that because He was the one who would make Isaiah's words come to life. It was all about Him.

Then later on in Luke 24, verse 27, it says that after He died and resurrected, Jesus didn't change His mind. He appeared to His disciples on the road to Emmaus. And it says that beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained to them the things written about Himself in all the scriptures. And the significance to this is that not only did Isaiah write about Him, but all the prophets did. Not only did one of them do it, but every single one, including Moses, the first author of Scripture, to show that Jesus was the one who would bring it all to pass. In fact, I read somewhere this week that the New Testament, to emphasize this, quoted from the Old Testament 293 times. That's more than 10 times per book. And when you put it all together, you come to the percentage that about 10% of the New Testament is nothing more than a reference to the old. Because the authors were constantly saying to you, as you read the Old Testament, look at how this points to Christ, look at how this points to Christ, look at how this points to Christ. And here's what this means today, if you want to be saved, this is what you have to do, you have to look at how this points to Christ. You have to fix your eyes on the One the prophets spoke about.

I know we've almost made it cliché today to say that you need to believe in Jesus. But if anything, the author of Hebrews is saying at the beginning here, that this is not a cliché thing at all, because it has all this depth to it. It has all this background behind it. When you believe in Jesus Christ, you're trusting in someone that the prophets had been building up to 4000 years. And when you hope in Him, you're hoping and a Messiah that they've been talking about since the dawn of time, because this was not something that happened randomly in the mind of God, he was not a spur of the moment thing, this was His plan all along. And the author starts off this way. Because if you were a Jew, reading this in the first century, you can imagine you would have a hard time with this. Because you'd be saying to yourself, "This can't be the way God is going to save the world. Just look at Jesus, He died on the cross like a slave, like a common criminal. But the author is pointing out to you that if you think that way, you're looking at this the wrong way, because God spoke about Him through the prophets. Jesus goes all the way back to the beginning. And you have to understand the significance of that as a Christian.

And I was talking to someone the other day, who said they weren't a Christian, but they were interested in becoming one but the one thing that was holding them back was how complicated it was. You go to this church, and they tell you one thing, you go to another church, they tell you another. Chilliwack is full of churches. And we can all sympathize with that. So I told her, it's not the way it's supposed to be. The Christian life is supposed to be simple. Because Jesus said, "I am the way the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father but through me." He didn't say on the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father, but through the Baptists. And he said, "I'm the light of the world, he who follows me will not walk in darkness." He didn't say he who follows the Mennonites will not walk in darkness or the Methodists. It's way more simple than that. It's only about Christ. That's how you're saved. He is the one who makes it all possible. Which is different from what the Jews had in the Old Testament. Well, they had the word of God, it didn't come in such a straightforward manner, but you do by the grace of God, and you should be grateful for it to live on this side of the cross.

And that brings us to another reason why Jesus is greater than the prophets. And that is because His character is greater. If you're taking notes, the first one is because his revelation was greater, because while the Lord told us

amazing things through the Old Testament, it was nothing compared to this. Jesus finished the Bible in a way no one else ever did. He brought it all to a grinding halt, so the spotlight would shine on Him. But it brings us to another reason why He's greater. And that is because His character was greater than the prophets. And that means that His nature was greater or the kind of person that He was. And if you read in verses one through three, it says,

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions, and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and He upholds all things by the Word of His power.

Now, as you read on in this passage, again, this is one long sentence here. It's one long thought in the mind of the author. But it does shift from talking about prophecy to talking about Jesus in particular. Because it says, "In these last days, God has spoken to us in His Son" and then he goes on to give you seven descriptions of Christ, that begin in verse two and then go all the way down to verse four. He's going to give you seven quotations from the Old Testament in chapter one, but here he gives you seven descriptions of Christ. And we'll only get through the first few today because the rest will save until later. But the first one is that He is heir of all things. See that in verse two, which means that He owns them, they belong to Him. Not some things, but all things. Not a few items in this world, but everything, the whole world is His and all that it contains because He is the heir of it. And the word heir there refers to someone who received the property of their parents after they died, it was handed down to them as part of the family.

Verse two says that Jesus was appointed to that role. That means it was laid out for Him ahead of time. He was decided beforehand, in the council of the Trinity when the Father, Son and Holy Spirit met in eternity past to determine who would save the world. And when that happened, it was decided that the Son would do it, he would come to earth, become a man, die for our sins, and then ascend into heaven to await the time when He would rule the earth as His inheritance; you see the connection there. He would do it as part of the eternal agreement that was made with the members of the Godhead. Theologians refer to this as the eternal subordination of the Son, which refers to the fact that Jesus did not become the son of God one day; He didn't wake up one morning and magically appear as the second member of the Trinity. It was something that he always possessed. And as such, there were certain things that were appointed to Him, and one of them was to rule the world. We'll talk about how He's going to rule the world in the weeks to come and reign as king over it. But one commentator said it this way. He said, "This shows us that from the beginning, Christ was the center of all God's plans and purposes, for His creation. Because before a single creature was called into existence, God had appointed an heir to all things, and that heir was Jesus. It was the predestined reward of his voluntary humiliation. It was the crown that God would give him after his time on Earth was done." This is why the Jews had a hard time understanding what Jesus did. But he came the first time to suffer, he'll come the second time to rule he came the first time to be a servant will come the next time to be a king. But this shows you how to deliberate it all was, because it was talked about from the beginning.

And just to keep moving here, the verse goes on to give you a second description of Christ, when it says "through whom also He made the world." That means that Jesus helped God create. He assisted the Lord in its formation, to point out the fact that again, Jesus is God, because God is the only one who can do that. The angels can't create and neither can men. Demons can't do it, and neither can prophets. God is the only one who creates. And that is who Jesus was. If you remember, the book of Genesis, says that when the Lord was about to make man, he said,

“Let us make man in our image,” and the word “us” there, it's a reference to the Trinity. Because there's no one else that could relate to God, and He didn't make him in the image of demons or angels that were in existence at the time, that wouldn't make sense. It's a reference to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. John, chapter one also says that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and through Him all things were made. And that means Jesus was the channel through which God created the world.

So the idea here, which gives us Jesus' third description, and that is that He is the radiance of God's glory. And that's an interesting word in Greek because it is translated as brightness in some of your translations. It's the only time the word appears in the Bible, because it refers to the rays of the sun, or the flickers of light that come forth from a fire. The term is used here to say that just as you can't look at the sun and live, you can't look at God and do it. So this is what God did for you. He gave you Jesus Christ, so you can look to Him. You can fix your eyes on Him because He's like the rays of the sun. He's the one part of God you can actually see and live to tell about it. Jesus told Thomas in John 14, verse nine, “He that has seen me has seen the Father.” And in Colossians, it says, “In Him the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form.”

This brings us to a fourth description here, and that is that He is the exact representation of God's nature. And that means that He is the stamp of it or the impression. He says the same thing from another angle because whereas the former word tied this into the sun, this one tied it into the workplace. Because in those days before a king could send a letter to someone, he would have to roll it up and stamp it with his impression in order to keep it safe. And that's what God did with Jesus. He is God's signature, if you will, His stamp of approval.

And just rounding off the list here, one more description is found in verse three. And that is that He upholds all things by the Word of His power. And that's a good way to finish it for now. Because that doesn't mean that Jesus holds all things on His back, or He carries them, it means He upholds them. He takes all things to their proper end, He makes sure everything in this world falls into place, just as it's supposed to. That verb is in the present tense in Greek to show this is an ongoing thing. He does it over and over again as the Son of God. But the point in all this is that this is the one you're dealing with here. The author is giving you such vivid descriptions about the character of Christ, to say this is the one God has used to speak to you in these last days, it was none other than the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. Which means that when Jesus says He can save you, He can really save you. When He says He can help you, He can really help. Because He is all of this. He's the heir of all things, the radiance of God's glory, and the exact representation of His nature, because this is not a normal person you're dealing with here. This is not an ordinary part of creation, He is so much greater than that. In fact, as we said, last time, you know, Jesus can take care of the universe, and surely He can take care of you, amen? If he can uphold it, and sustain it and create it, then surely He can do it with your little life, or with our little country that's small to Him. So you can trust Him, you have no reason to be anxious and afraid when you go through life, because your hope is not in a temporary King, your hope is an eternal King. Your hope is not in a lord of this world. It's in a law that's higher than that.

And this is important, because if you notice as the author is describing your salvation here, he doesn't start with you. As he tells you how God can save you, and redeem you, and give you atonement, and forgiveness of sins, he doesn't begin by telling you to do something here, like keep the law or follow the commandments or make the sacrifices. He starts with Christ. And that's it. It begins with Jesus. And that's all because that's all it takes to save you now. You don't need another Lord. Now, I don't I don't know about you. But when I was reading this, I was really struck by the fact that you can't get any greater than this, can you. You can't get any bigger than someone

who is heir of all things. Because that's the point. There is nothing in all of creation that is larger than Jesus Christ. So there's nothing else you need to turn to, in order to be right with God, Jesus is all you need. You know, we have an expression here as a church that says that once saved, always saved if saved. Why? Because it's Jesus that saves you. He is the one that does all the work. If you did all the work, we couldn't say that. If it was up to you to save yourself, we couldn't say that salvation is that secure, because you're going to mess it up. But it's not about you. It's about Him. And the good news with that is that nothing can stop Jesus. The devil can't do it and the demons can't do it. The world can't do it and neither can the culture and all the evil things we're seeing today. The government can't do it and neither can all the bad things we're watching take place in Ottawa. Jesus is stronger than all of that. So if you come to Him, you'll be safe forever in His arms.

I mention this early on in the first chapter because you're going to come to stuff in the book of Hebrews that's going to shake you up a little bit. In fact, it's going to frighten you because it might make you think you can lose your salvation. Because you're going to come to a passage like Hebrews six. If you guys want to turn over to Hebrews chapter six, verse four. You're going to go to a text like this one, and you're going to say, oh, no, because it says in chapter six, verse four, "For in the case of those who have once been enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and had been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the son of God and put Him to open shame." You know, I've talked to people that have read this passage and they said that means that I can lose my salvation. I can't be renewed again once I sin. But I wanted to show you what verses one and two and three in chapter one say, because that can't be the case; that would contradict everything the book talks about in the beginning. This doesn't mean you can lose your salvation. This just means that if you're a hypocrite, you can, if you're faking it, because you've once been enlightened and tasted the heavenly gift, in a superficial way, you can mess it up to the point that you can repent. But for those who are sincere, it's impossible, because it rests on the arms of Christ. And that is good news, nothing more encouraging than that.

And it brings us to one more reason why Jesus is greater than the prophets. Just to review these other ones, first, because His revelation was greater. Second, because His character was greater. Jesus' character is greater than anything; nothing even compares to Him. But it brings us to one more reason why He's greater than these men and that is because His mission was greater. Which means that He had a more important task to accomplish than all who had come before. His mission was greater. And if you read on in the first chapter, it says this,

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. 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, having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

Just to show you how this is divided up here, if you notice, the author goes on to give you two more descriptions of Christ in verse four, when he says that he has become much better than the angels having inherited a more excellent name, and we will talk about that next time. But he does that to show you Jesus' greatness from another direction, because he said, just as Christ is greater than the prophets, He's greater than the angels. Just as he's greater than anything on this earth and all that it has to offer, Jesus is greater than anything in heaven.

But before he goes into that, he tells you about Jesus' mission, when it says that He made purification for sins in verse three. That cuts right to the heart of the book because this is what the Old Testament was all about. It was all about making purification for sins. The Old Testament said that the Lord wanted to make Israel a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. And in order to do that, He had to clean them off first through the law. He had to make them holy through the sacrifices, because the idea is that every time you sinned, here is what you did as a Jew, you had to bring an animal to the priest, and he would kill it. And that's how you were forgiven, and the sin was washed away. But the problem is that you couldn't do it forever. Because as time went on, you just kept sinning. So you had to keep killing animal after animal after animal. And so the author of Hebrews says, in order to help you, this is what God did, he gave you something better, and that is the sacrifice of Christ. Because Jesus made purification once and for all. The verb for made purification here is in a tense that means that unlike the Old Testament sacrifices, Jesus only did it once because the cross took care of everything that you need to be right with God. And then it says that after making purification Jesus sat down. I told you last time that that is an interesting phrase, because the priests in the Old Testament never did that. They never sat down because they always had something more to do so that every time they were on duty they were standing. But here it says Jesus sat down to symbolize that for Him the work was over. His sacrifice was perfect. It says he also sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, which is another way of saying that after He died, Jesus went straight into the presence of God in heaven to show that your sins were all dealt with completely.

In the Roman Catholic Church has a doctrine called Transubstantiation which says that every time the Mass is offered, Jesus is brought down from heaven to be re-crucified. The Bible says it's totally false because He's seated now with the Father. And He never has to do that again, because it took care of everything for you. Whatever needed to be done about sin, Jesus did it while He was on the earth, whatever needed to be paid, he paid it completely in His blood. And in fact, just to show you how essential this is to this book, I want you to know this is not the only time this idea is going to come up, because it will be repeated later on. If you turn to chapter two, verse 17 there you see the same word, or the same idea repeated another way. When it says in verse 17, therefore he had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest, and things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. And the word propitiation there refers to the taking away of wrath. Because this is what Jesus did for us on the cross, as our high priests, he took away God's wrath against us. He bore the weight of it so he wouldn't have to. The Bible says, when we sin, God is angry with us, it makes Him mad. So Jesus came in order to satisfy God's wrath who has the once and for all offering on the cross.

And also the Bible says that Jesus came to remit our sins. If you look in chapter nine, verse 26. This is another way of expressing this. And chapter nine, verse 26, it says, "Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin [or remit them,] by the sacrifice of Himself." That phrase "put away sin" is very powerful there because it gives the idea that He put them as far away as the east is from the west, he buried them in the sea. One author said that when Jesus died on the cross, He didn't just pay for our sins, but He liquidated them, He erased them entirely from the slate so that it was like they were never even there.

There are a few more verses that talk about this. Chapter 10, verse 11, says that he made Christ a sacrifice for our sins. We've already said a little bit about that, but He put Christ in the place of the bull and the lamb and the goat

on the altar. Later on in chapter 10, verse 18, the author says, Jesus became the offering for sin. Chapter Nine, verse 28, says He became the sin bearer. He bore our sins on the cross.

And let me tell you what this means for us practically. Just to back that truck up for a moment, and talk about how you can apply this to your lives. And you really need to understand this. This means for your life, that if you believe in Jesus, and you trust in Him, like we've been talking about this morning, God will never ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever bring up your sins again, ever. This means that if you're safe, he will never ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever punish you for them. Why? Because they've been punished already. They've been paid at the cross. So there's nothing more for you to pay anymore. They've already been judged by God, the Lord has thrown the book at them so you can be saved and have grace. Isn't that good news? Let me tell you what else this means. This also means that if you're in Christ and you've put your faith in Him, then God will never ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever keep you out of heaven. God will never ever, ever say that you're not good enough to go there. Why? Because Jesus was good enough. Because Jesus is there already to remind you that you can go there too, if you believe in Him. You can go to heaven if you put your soul in His hands. But the reason you can do that is because God gave you a perfect salvation. It's spotless in every way. So there's nothing more to add to it because Christ paid it all. There's a law here in Canada, called the law of double jeopardy, which says that the same person can't be punished for the same crime twice. He can't prosecute a criminal for the same thing two different times. And it's the same way here because God has punished YOUR SINS already as a Christian. He is paid for them at the cross. So you don't have to worry about it anymore. But it was all because of His infinite grace. You know, I've heard it said before that it would take a great person to pay for a great sin. And it would take an infinite person to pay for an infinite amount of them. And that's what you have in Jesus, you have an infinite God, to pay for everything. And that's what we're going to be talking about more in the weeks to come. We're going to be looking at this in detail as we go through the book of Hebrews, verse by verse, but I just wanted to talk about it today in order to prepare you for that; this is what the Christian life is about: it's about knowing and following the Lord Jesus Christ.

To highlight this, I was studying for this passage this week, and I was reminded of the time that several of our men from church went to the Shepherd's conference in Los Angeles. And right before the conference started, we took a tour of the Masters University. And on the wall of their library was a plaque with these words from John MacArthur, it came from one of his sermons. And I wanted to read it to you because it encompasses what this is all about. And it says this,

We preach Christ, who is the eternal Son, one in nature with the Father and the eternal Spirit, the Triune God, and we preach Christ who is a creator, life giver, as well as the sustainer of the universe and all who live in it, who is the Virgin born son of God and son of man, fully divine and fully human. We preach Christ who is the one whose life on Earth perfectly pleased God, and His righteousness is given to all who by grace through faith become one with Him. We preach Christ who is the only acceptable sacrifice for sin that pleases God and whose death under divine judgment, paid in full the penalty for the sins of His people, providing for them forgiveness and eternal life. We preach Christ who is alive, having been raised from the dead by the father, validating His work of atonement, and providing resurrection for the sanctification and glorification of the elect, to bring them safely into his heavenly presence. We preach Christ who is at the Father's throne, interceding for all believers, who is God's chosen Prophet, Priest, and King, proclaiming truth, mediating for His church, and reigning over His kingdom forevermore. We preach Christ, who will return suddenly from heaven to rapture His church, unleash judgment on the

wicked, bring promised salvation to the Jews and the nations and establish His millennial reign on the earth. We preach Christ who will after that earthly reign, destroy the universe, finally judge all sinners and send them to hell then create the new heavens and new earth, where He will dwell forever with the saints in glory and joy. We preach Christ who is the hope for sinners, light of the world, Bread of Life, and shepherd of Lost Souls. We preach Christ who is the only sure way to go to heaven.

Friends, we could say the same thing today. That's what we do here as a church. We're here to preach Christ. And would you close with me in a word of prayer, and ask for God to bless this work of proclaiming His Son. Heavenly Father, we come to you this morning with hearts full of joy, and what our savior has done. We preach Christ because He is the one who has saved us and forgiven us, there's no one else. And Lord, we're just scratching the surface and dipping our toe in the sand of this wonderful book of Hebrews. But even right here at the beginning, we have to stop for a moment and just say thank you for what you have given us in Your Son, Lord of all the peoples on this earth and all those on the planet you've allowed us to receive this revelation. And God, humble us. We should go out of church this morning, overawed that you would find us and call us out in such a manner. Lord, we're sinners. We don't deserve this great gift. And we have broken your law this week. There's so many things we've done wrong. But we come running to the Saviour, Lord asking for forgiveness. Thank You that we have a Saviour like this one. Thank you that there's nothing lacking in Him and He is sufficient. And Lord, I pray for those who are here this morning, who are saved that such a word of such a Saviour would encourage them for those who are lost. I pray that it would remind them of what they don't have and what they can have. Because this is a Savior who comes with open arms. For all those who believe, Lord God be glorified as we close out our service, come to our care groups, and talk about the word that we've heard this morning. May Christ be glorified in it all and we pray this in His name. Amen.