

Worship Christ the Newborn King!

Hebrews 1; Malachi 3:1, 3; John 4:23; Revelation 5; 19; Romans 12:1

Hebrews 1 — ¹ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

⁵ For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”?

Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”?

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

⁷ Of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.”

⁸ But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,
the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.

⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”

¹⁰ And, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning,
and the heavens are the work of your hands;

¹¹ they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment,

¹² like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed.

But you are the same, and your years will have no end.”

¹³ And to which of the angels has he ever said,
“Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?

¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

PRAY

1. Worship Christ the Newborn King: He came to restore worship!

There are 2 days, or epochs, from God's perspective. **The saving work of Jesus in his incarnation is the dividing line between the former days and the last days.**

Jesus is the gravitational center of the bible, of all creation, and of all time.

The cross of Christ is the axis on which everything turns.

From the bible's perspective, we are in the last days, and have been since Christ's resurrection.

Let's consider the Former days described in v. 1.

In the former days, worship and communion center on sacrifices for sins offered by human intermediaries who speak on God's behalf. This is a vivid reminder that sin brings separation and death.

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We note that God spoke through different agents. A careful reader of the Scripture should have an awareness that, if we now see agents speaking on God's behalf, something devastating has happened since Genesis 2. God's people were in direct communion with him, but now there's someone in between. There is a layer, a thick veil that has come to be in place between God and his people. It wasn't so in the opening lines of creation.

So through these intermediaries we know that sin has produced catastrophic loss for Adam and Eve. God no longer immediately communes as he had. Now there is separation. Frankly, when you consider the treasonous, idolatrous hearts of his people, the words "God spoke" paint a stunning picture of grace, since he had told them their disobedience would produce death. His speaking shows he did not completely abandon them to their sin.

And also note the mercy shown through the use of intermediaries. They not only spoke for God, but, in *their* speaking on God's behalf, the hearers were saved from direct exposure to his sin-consuming holiness. Our God is a consuming fire.

The former days are marked by many ways of revelation.

People spoke from different offices; a donkey spoke at one point; a disembodied hand wrote on a wall... God spoke to Joseph in a dream. We won't look at all those this morning, but **I want us to focus briefly on three types of intermediaries: Prophets, priests, and kings.**

- **Prophets** took the word of God and published it to the people. He was a middle man, if you will. The people did not directly hear God or see God. But God spoke through the prophets who in turn said to the people, "**Thus says the Lord.**"
- **Priests held a liturgical office** — they facilitated worship. They were lead worshipers, if you will. Again, because sin separates, the people were not able to come directly to God, but required someone to make sacrifice for sins and deal with their sins in the way that God had prescribed. Prophets spoke for the Lord; priests sacrificed and made offerings before Lord for sin and other prescribed acts of worship.
- **Kings** became intermediary rulers of God's people once they rejected God's direct oversight. They were to know God's word and govern in ways that directed people to walk in his ways. Last month we saw even the best of kings fell far short of their assignment. Most were total failures.

Don't forget this: **Prophets, priests, and kings were not necessary in Genesis 2.**

In Genesis 2 our parents experienced what God created them to do: They sat at the table of communion in innocence, in unbroken wonder and worship.

But death-producing sin occurs, separation is immediate, and the nearness of God is lost.

- Our federal head, Adam, is driven away from the table of communion.
- That table of pure communion is replaced by an altar of bloody sacrifice.

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- Meeting with God was ultimately limited to once a year; a priest had to pass through a thick veil and sling blood on the mercy seat of the ark as a reminder of the cost of sin and a picture of sin's price being paid.

Those prophets, priests, and kings were inadequate intermediaries floundering about in miserable attempts to recover the communion and worship of Genesis 2.

The bloody sacrifices permanently fixed nothing — they just temporarily appeased God's wrath and reminded people of what sin does.

Those were the former days: Agents used graciously by God to remind his people how far they have fallen and how much their sin costs. **But those agents were also used to stir up the hearts of God's people through his promises and their imperfection to look forward to, and long for the day of salvation when God would again rule his people...** On that day, they would no longer be separated by sin. God would draw near again.

When God is near, human intermediaries are no longer needed. He directly reveals himself to, and communes with his people. They **see and savor, him. They are transformed by his glory, his goodness, his holiness, and his grace. This ignites worship in the heart of the one who draws near.** God directly receives the worship of those who draw near and behold his glory and holiness. He is in direct rule and reign over his people; he is their king.

Is your worship cold or non-existent? See, at this season, how God draws near! Come behold the King of kings. Study him. Be captivated by him. Fix your eyes on him and let his beauty and character ignite worship in your heart!

But that is just verse 1. And we've got a lot of sermon to get to! Lord, as it was with those in the former days, may our hearts now be stirred to worship by your work of grace in the Last Days!

In these last days God recovers true worship, centering us on the Lamb of God. In these last days we worship at the very throne of grace because of the finished work of Christ. We are brought near to God and delivered from death to life.

v. 2 — In these Last Days, he has spoken to us by his Son!

Where is the list of intermediaries? Where are the agents? In these last days — these days! — he is speaking to us through his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things! In this Christmas season rejoice in this: Communion with God and worship is restored through Christ, the newborn King!

- **Jesus Christ permanently replaces the prophets** who heard God's word and then repeated it. Jesus Christ is the Word of God! The Word became flesh and dwells among us! He plainly reveals God — not from a fiery, beclouded mountain that could not be approached, but has drawn near in human form, calling us to draw near to God. His perfect life and atoning sacrifice perfectly reveals God's holiness and

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redeeming grace! **He permanently occupies the office of prophet**, forever bridging the separation that required an intermediary in the first place.

- **And Jesus permanently occupies the office of Priest**, forever paying the price for sin once for all — not by sacrificing some other lamb, but by **becoming the spotless sacrificial Lamb of God**, slain from the foundation of the world. He perfectly and permanently atones for the sin of everyone who comes to him in faith by taking their sin on his cross, and clothing them in his righteousness.
- **And as believers turn from their deadly sin and fatally flawed self-effort to make things right with God, they come under the eternal life-giving rule and reign of Lord Jesus**, who does what all of the other kings could never do, conquering all their enemies. Their assignment was to impose a righteous government of external laws hemming in sinful behavior. The Kingdom of Jesus is not one of external requirements, but of a new heart joyfully subjected to the King, delighting in obedience to God!

This is what is happening through the virgin birth of God's Son in a manger in Bethlehem!

This is what we celebrate! God overcomes and conquers death and the separation of sin.

He recovers communion and worship, which we could never do, and didn't even desire to do!

The pursuing love of God is chasing down rebels — he comes seeking and saving the lost, not treating us as our sins deserve. Instead from his hand we receive grace upon grace upon grace!

The Second Adam, from above, has come to reinstate us in his love!

In love, he came near to rescue and restore us to the communion and worship we were created for. Do you recall what priests did? They facilitated worship. They served the Lord in worship.

Look with me at **Revelation 5:9–10a**.

Revelation 5:9–10a — “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰ and **you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God**.”

Worship is recovered by the Lamb of God.

He redeemed us with his blood that we might worship! In light of the cost of so great a salvation, worship Christ the newborn King! **He restores worship, communion, and nearness to God by making peace with God by the blood his cross.**

II. *Worship Christ the Newborn King: He has made this possible!*

In the short time we have remaining, I want to draw your attention to beauty and character Jesus, who entered the world over 2000 years ago. He came to restore the communion God purposed from the beginning, and in communion with him, in being near him, our hearts must be stirred to worship by the beauty of and majesty of our King. During Christmas in 2020, let's grow deeper in knowledge of Christ, and thereby become worshipers, as the angel choir did over Bethlehem fields, as shepherds did when saw the Savior,

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and as the Wise Men did when they traveled to see him who was foretold. In short, let us come see and bow before this King, and understand who he is that we may give him the glory he is due.

Let's consider the character of Christ and find ***Fuel for Worship***.

He is the Self-existent Creator

Hebrews 1:2 — in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. *and then...*

vvs. 10–11a — You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; ¹¹ they will perish, but you remain...

God is self-existent and infinite in being and perfection. He has the power of being in himself. He has no need. None. God is eternally content in the trinity. Yet he stooped to meet our need. Stunning! The Uncreated Creator, condescended, coming in human likeness, taking on flesh.

He became what he was not without ever ceasing to be what he was.

He forever became what he was not — man, without ever ceasing to be what he was — God, with no confusion of the two natures, and no mixture. The mystery of godliness is great.

He was manifested in the flesh: Fully man. The infinite, omnipresent God became a finite baby, limiting his earthly presence to perhaps 18 square inches in a manger. Stretch your sanctified imagination and let the incarnation of very God move you to awe and wonder about such love. He who knew no boundary bound himself in time and space. He who is invisible, limitless spirit became visible flesh and blood. He who inhabits eternity entered 33 years.

He made us, and is infinitely greater than us, yet in his human nature set aside his authority, and power, and boundlessness to secure our salvation. Will your heart not bow to your Creator and worship — not just for creating you in the first place, but for re-creating you, giving you eternal life?

He is God: v. 3a — He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.

He is fully God. Is your mind not prompted to recall our memory passage in Colossians 1? “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.” This was true in his divine nature even while on earth. As God, he has authority over everything. Everything was created by him, and for him. As God, he has the authority to command, and to require. As God, he is the measure of what is right and true. He is the Righteous Judge. We are to fear this holy God, knowing that we are not holy, but sinful people. We dare not continue in rebellion against this God, but rather bow and own him Lord and King.

Sustaining power is his: v. 3b — he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

He is self-existent, requiring nothing. But all of creation is dependent on his life-sustaining grace. He works all things according to the counsel of his will, as Ephesians 1 says. He purposes, he wills, he brings about. We are utterly dependent on him for the next breath in our lungs. And he gives it!

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See the progression of grace as we move these attributes!

He has created us for his purpose, but we rebelled and worshiped other things. As God he judges our sin and would be just in casting us into hell.

As the sustainer, he could simply stop sustaining the life of rebels, yet here we sit and breathe, and have our being. It is grace that gives another heartbeat... but now look at the fullness of love and grace...

He saves sinners: v. 3c — **After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.**

The God who comes to us does come to us out of his need. He comes to us out of our need.

Holy God, against whom we have sinned, enters a body to take his own penalty against sin.

This **Sustaining God**, on whom we are dependent for our very lives, comes down to make atonement for our sin and purify us from unrighteousness rather than destroying us as the rebellious sinners we are. He does so at his own expense. Can you now sing *Amazing Grace* in the same way?

You see, it is not merely that we need to stop sinning, but we must be cleansed from sin. If we are to be recovered as worshipers, our hands that we have used as instruments of sin must be washed, and our hearts that should love God but have pursued idols must be purified. And this is what the Jesus, the newborn King has come to do. Malachi foretold exactly this:

Malachi 3:1–3 — “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. ²But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. ³He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord.

He not only designed us to be worshipers, he not only calls us to return to worship, he purifies us so that we can be worshipers. Stand in awe of what he done. And as you come to him in faith, come boldly before his throne of grace — not based on what you have done or any effort to cleanse yourself. But come behold before the throne of grace having your heart sprinkled with his cleansing, purifying. You are adopted as his children and declared righteous because of his now-finished work. Worship this grace-filled, forgiving newborn King!

His throne is established forever: v. 3d, 8–9

What he has done, his work of atonement, his conquering of sin and death, will never be exhausted. His throne, his rule and reign is established forever. His redeeming grace can never be undone; it will never fail because he will never cease to reign on the throne of David.

He conquers his enemies: v. 13 — “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?

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Our foe, Satan, is dealt a final, fatal blow by this head-crushing Newborn King. We may not view him as a conquering warrior, but as some emasculated ceramic figure painted in pale pink tones in a nativity set. But behold your conquering King! Were it not for his victory over sin and death and Satan himself, your final enemy, death, would remain in power. All Christ's enemies, which are all your enemies, are defeated by the Newborn King!

He frees from the **penalty** of sin by taking our sin-debt on himself and making atonement.

He frees from the **power** of sin and death giving eternal life through his resurrection from the dead.

And he ultimate frees us from the **presence** of sin when this King, whom we celebrate as newborn during this seasons, returns usher in his new creation

Worship is where we are going. Worship is how we will get there.

He redeemed us to restore us to communion as worshipers. He came to seek and save the lost because he is seeking worshipers: **But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.** (John 4:23)

Revelation 19 brings us all the way back to the table of communion that was lost in Genesis 3.

At the Marriage Supper of the Lamb we are back in face-to-face communion because of the rescue, redemption, rule, and reign of this newborn King.

Today is the day of salvation, and that means that today is the day of worship! Don't miss, don't deprive yourself of the communion he died to restore! He is worthy of worship! It is right that we think of these truths of his character and so learn to love God with our minds. Worship Christ the Newborn King with everything you have: time, money, resource, talent, intellect. Lift your voice! Array your life around King Jesus. This is your reasonable spiritual worship, as Romans 12 says.

Romans 12:1 — I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Turn from what takes you from this glorious King. Don't let harbored sin rob you of the grace he brings. Turn from defiling sin to the Savior from sin who is born in the city of David. He will purify your heart and clothe you in his righteousness. Come to Jesus and receive grace upon grace.

And don't let angels in some field near backwater Bethlehem out-sing you in declaring God's glory. Let your voice echo through the city of Wichita, in your family gathering, with your friends, on the job, in the market place, and down the halls of heaven.

Declare the glory of the Savior who is born.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.