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## The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

*...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)*

Hebrews 1:2b-3

*...in these last days [God] has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. 3 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...*

Have you ever noticed how easy it can be to forget things? How many of you have ever gone from one room to the next only to forget why you came into the room in the first place? How many of you have been told something that you said to yourself, “I surely will remember this?” Only to fail to recall the information when it was needed? Or perhaps you are in a conversation with some fact on the tip of your tongue and out of politeness you hesitate to interrupt only to forget a moment later what it was you wanted to say?

Often times we blame such things on getting older, but I find forgetfulness to be a very common malady among the human race. How many parents and grandparents have been bewildered at how quickly children seem to forget the rules or requests made to them? Yes, we can be a forgetful people. Just the other day my wife and I were reminiscing about our first memories as children. It is amazing what we could remember, but it was amazing and somewhat disturbing at all the people, places and things that could not be recalled with much clarity.

If such is the human condition with regard to such things, how could we ever come to believe that such forgetfulness is not capable of finding its way into our relationship with God? In fact, the Scriptures are replete with example after example of those who seem to “forget” the greatness and the goodness of the living God. In the Law of God, Moses and the LORD constantly reminded the people not to forget the LORD, both His doings and His commandments. And what are the things that might cause God’s people to forget – look with me at Deuteronomy 6:10-12.

*10 Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, 11 and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied, 12 then watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*

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We learn here that one of the greatest temptations by which we are prone to forget the Lord is in times of prosperity and or when we are more focused upon what we can get and what we want than upon dependence upon the Lord. And the people of Israel, those who saw the visible manifestation of the presence of God rest upon the Holy of Holies, the people of God whose lives had been delivered and protected from countless calamities, the people of God, who saw great and mighty miracles and who heard and studied the word of God continually, did yet forget the Lord. The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah record -

*Isaiah 17:10*

*For you have forgotten the God of your salvation and have not remembered the rock of your refuge.*

*Isaiah 51:12-13*

*I, even I, am He who comforts you. Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies and of the son of man who is made like grass, 13 That you have forgotten the LORD your Maker, Who stretched out the heavens And laid the foundations of the earth,*

*Jeremiah 2:32*

*Can a virgin forget her ornaments, Or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten Me Days without number.*

*Jeremiah 18:15*

*For My people have forgotten Me, They burn incense to worthless gods And they have stumbled from their ways, From the ancient paths, To walk in bypaths, Not on a highway...*

Yes, the people of God can forget the greatness and goodness of God. That means that you and I can forget if we are not doing what is necessary not to forget. And just what is necessary so as not to forget the greatness and goodness of the Lord. The number one thing is simply to be constantly exposing oneself to the Word and praying that the Lord might continually open your eyes to see such things.

As we find our way back to this letter to the Hebrews, we find the author greatly desiring to remind his readers of the greatness and goodness of the Lord as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Working through this letter, we find a group of professing Christians who were tempted by their circumstances to see

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Jesus in either a diminished light or to forget His greatness altogether. These were believers who had a high regard for God's Word as revealed by the great prophets of the Old Testament. These were believers who believed in the power and presence of the mighty angels of God. These were believers who held men like Moses and Joshua in high esteem over all other men. They had started their journey in Christianity with a high view and focus upon Christ, but as the pressures of life, the busyness of the times, and problems mounted, they were beginning to forget or forsake the person of Jesus Christ. So then, our author does an absolutely remarkable thing in these opening verses of Hebrews. After acknowledging the validity and truthfulness of the Old Testament and its prophets, the author now shows forth the vast supremacy of Christ in a seven-fold description. In just one and half verses, the author reveals these seven characteristics that are designed to do one thing – refocus the hearts and minds of the readers upon Christ as He who is above all.

If we are ever tempted to diminish or forget Christ, may we come to these pictures of Jesus and ask for a renewed vision of who our Savior, Redeemer and God is. May we understand the tendency we have to be seduced and get lost in our times, thinking that Christ is only a part of our lives or only deserves a small segment because we have lost the right perspective of who He is. How can we think any less and ascribe any less of a place and priority to Christ, thinking somehow that jobs, wealth, relationships, sex, entertainment and the like could or should allow us to consider Christ only among such common things? Behold your God in the person of Jesus Christ and may these descriptions, as we work through them, become your vision of Him.

## 1. Christ the Heir (1:2b)

A couple of weeks ago, we began looking at the first of these seven descriptions noting in Hebrews 1:2 that Jesus is first referred to as the one "*whom He [God] appointed heir of all things.*" Quickly let me remind you then that the idea of heirship here speaks both of the fact that Jesus is the receiver or recipient of all things, in other words that all things are moving toward His ownership and will one day soon belong to Him; but that He is also the executor of His inheritance, that is to say, He will determine how all things work out. Both the good and the bad will find themselves standing before Him as both heir and Judge. For those who have trusted in Him will be the reward of entering into His Father's rest. For those who have not trusted in Him, they will be condemned for their disregard of His goodness and greatness and thrown into an eternal lake of

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fire. So again, to be the Heir pictures everything that exists as finding its true meaning only when it comes under the final control of Jesus Christ.

## 2. Christ the Creator (1:2c)

Now then, this morning we consider another short, but incredibly pregnant phrase describing our Lord Jesus Christ. It is found at the end of verse 2 where we read, *“through whom also He made the world.”* In a short word we see Jesus Christ here as the Creator, but we see several important points about Christ as Creator here as well.

To begin with, let us consider the phrase, *“through whom.”* The construction here in the Greek tells us that Jesus is being pictured as the agent through whom the world was made. Now it may well be that few of you here have a problem with Jesus as the Creator. However there are a number of groups that struggle with this and seek to make this statement less than what it is. There are those who point out that only God can create and that this verse tells us that God did in fact create and that He used Jesus only as some secondary tool or instrument in that event.

I must agree with the idea that only God can create, but must take issue that Jesus is here presented as only a secondary instrument or cause. For neither this phraseology or the rest of Scripture present Christ in such a light. Now then, I do submit to you that the world was created *“through Christ”* meaning that He was not simply *“an”* agent of creation, but *“the”* agent of it. One paraphrase of this passage reads, *“Every being, to reach existence, must have passed through the thought and will of the Word [Logos] Christ.”* (Godet). Jesus is being presented as Creator and to speak of Him in this way stresses a divine function upon Christ that is quite a part from the abilities of any of the prophets.

When our text says that the Godhead made the world *“through Christ”* it is to say that Christ was the decided member of the Godhead to actively and purposely create all things. The idea of the Greek here in *“through Him”* is that Christ is responsible for at least three things. First, *“through Him”* speaks of Christ as the *“conceiver”* of all created things. Second, *“through Him”* speaks of Christ as the *“maintainer”* or *“preserver”* of all things. As Colossians 1:17 tells us *“in Him all things hold together.”* Third, *“through Him”* speaks of Christ as the ruler over all things. Again, Colossians 1:17 tells us that *“He is before all things”* and 1:18 tells us *“He is also head of the body, the church...”*

That Christ is the agent of creation here does not imply that He is put a passive tool, but the active executor of creation. For those who think that Jesus was only a tool miss the point altogether for again, only God can create,

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therefore for Christ to be the agent through whom God made the world, means that Christ had to create. Let me illustrate it this way. If my family is gathered at the table for dinner, but my son was not there, and I wanted to call my son to the dinner table, but he was not in hearing distance of my voice, I might ask my daughter to go and communicate with him that it is dinner time and that he needs to be at the table. As my daughter agrees, she would go to my son and say, "Dad wants you to come to the dinner table." So now, is my daughter a passive instrument or an active agent in that process? I submit to you that she must be an active agent. I am not holding her hand or speaking through her vocal chords. She is the one who performed the actual action of communication. In other words, the only reason why she could perform the action determined is because she had the ability to communicate and therefore she uses her mind, her mouth and her ability to speak. Now, in like manner, but to a far greater extend and without the failings of the illustration, in eternity past, the Godhead determined to create all things, out of nothing, in the space of six days and all very good. It was also determined that the Son, the second person of the Trinity, would be the prime agent through whom this activity would occur. But if Christ was to truly be the active agent, then He had to have the ability to create, much like my daughter had to have the ability to communicate. But here again, creating like this is only a divine function and this tells us that Christ is God.

Remember that the first readers of this letter were forgetting who Christ was – that Christ conceived all things, even the time, trials and circumstances they were going through; that Christ maintained all things, not allowing one circumstance, one person or even one atom to stray from His intended purpose; and that Christ is ruler of all things, that Christ was in control of all these things. We can forget these things as well. Sometimes we forget that Christ does have a plan and that our plans and desires are to be subservient and yielded to Him. Sometimes we forget that Christ does remember us and does have a plan for us when we encounter difficult times. He is the Creator, our Creator and we must not think that we must make plans apart from Him nor that His plans have some how excluded us.

Now, the author here only presents us with this aspect of Christ as Creator; as the conceiver, maintainer and ruler of Creation. This must be because these were facets of Christ that these first readers were most prominently forgetting. However, I believe it would do us well to see that the New Testament presents not only this, but also other facets of Christ as the Creator. Turn to Colossians 1:16. Here we read this, and I am purposely focusing on just a portion of this verse –

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*For by Him all things were created . . . all things have been created through Him and for Him.*

You see in this verse that all things were created by Christ three ways. First it says “by Him” or literally “in Him.” This means that in Christ resided all the creative will and energy. Second it says all things were created “through Him.” This is the same phrase as used in our Hebrews text picturing Christ as the agent of creation. Third it says all things were created “for Him” or literally in the Greek, “to or toward Him” meaning that Christ is the point to which all things tend and are moving to find their purpose.

We see the same basic pattern in Romans 11:36. There we read this –

*For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.*

Here we have a statement concerning God as creator, using similar language as we have come to see. First it says that all things are “from Him” meaning “out of” or “out from” Him, showing God as the source of power, energy and substance of creation. Then it says that all things are “through Him” which again is the same phrase used in Hebrews 1:2 when speaking of Christ. If Christ were only a passive instrument in Creation, then so too was God as this verse says the same thing. Rather, God, specifically in the person of Christ, is the active agent of creation. This passage ends with all things being “to Him” which is like the Colossians 1:16 passage which tells us that all things are moving to or toward Christ to be possessed by Him and to be used by Him.

So then we learn from all these passages that in Christ, all the created universe finds its –

- Conception – all things conceived in the will of Christ
- Construction – all things created in the ability of Christ
- Continuance – all things maintained by the power of Christ
- Consummation – all things find their true meaning and end in Christ.

Because of these things, Christ is to be seen, looked upon and considered superior and ultimately supreme over the prophets, the angels, Moses and the Old Testament. Because of these things, Christ is to be seen, looked upon and

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considered far superior and ultimately supreme over all things in our lives. Christ is not to simply occupy a space or a place, but is to be over all things.

Quickly now let me address the next to phrases of our Hebrews 1:2 passage. Not only do we read “through Him” but in addition “*also He made.*” We have been addressing the ideas of Christ’s creatorship, but this particular verb is interesting – “*poieo*” in the Greek, a verb which has the idea of making or fashioning. The noun form of this word is *poiema*, which means workmanship or masterpiece and is found in Ephesians 2:10, “*we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works...*” Here we learn that the masterpiece, which is “the world” must be made or created by a Master, who is Jesus Christ. It is God, and specifically the second person of the Godhead, who has created this tapestry of all things.

Finally then, let us consider the final phrase as we read, “*through whom also He made the world.*” Of course a casual reading would cause us to think in terms of this earth and perhaps all that is contained upon it. However, the author does not use the common word for “world” here *kosmos* in the Greek, but the word *aionas* from which we get the word “eons.” The “world” here speaks then not so much of simply the physical world, but also of all time, space, energy and matter. That Christ is the creator of the ages speak of the “sum of the periods of time, including all that is manifested in and through them...[it is] an order which exists through time developed in successive stages.”<sup>1</sup>

The best way I can illustrate what is meant by this is to say to you that Christ not only created the physical world, but also the “times of” or “ages of” all things. We often will speak of the “time of the Romans” or the “Age of Enlightenment.” When we speak in such a way, we refer to all the people, places and circumstances of such a time. Our text tells us how incredible is the power of Christ, as He made not only the physical earth and people, but also the very times, ages and circumstances in which they live. We see here Christ as being responsible not only for that which is physical then, but also for all time, space, energy and matter.

Look with me at Psalm 31:15 where we read of King David speaking in these very terms saying, “*My times are in Your hand; deliver me from the hand of my enemies and from those who persecute me.*” David realized that all of his days were under the making, maintaining and mastership of the Lord and he submitted himself to that. How about you, are you willing to recognize that all your days have been ordained and appointed by the hand of a might, all

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Westcott

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Sovereign God to fulfill His glorious purposes? Again, consider what David wrote in Psalm 139:16 saying,

*Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.*

Do such words bring comfort to your soul, knowing that your times are in the hands of the Almighty God? Or do such words bring consternation for fear that you are not in control and that you are subject to Him who made all such times? Let us not forget the words of the preacher who said in Ecclesiastes 3:1,

*There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven —*

Does your vision of the Lord Jesus Christ allow you to see Him as the one who has appointed and ordained your days? Are you running the same risk as the first hearers of this word, making Jesus someone less than who He truly is. For He is not only constructor of all that we see, but He is also the architect of your life. To be sure, we are not some mindless robots. We are to and must make real choices, some of which bring glory to God, others of which do not, but nonetheless, our times are in His hands. Whether in the face of triumphs or of trials, in times of prosperity or in times of poverty – do you lift up your eyes to the Lord? Look at Psalm 121:1-2 and how the psalmist makes this correlation between the time or age in which we live and God as the creator. He writes,

*I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where shall my help come? 2 My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.*

Behold your Savior! Behold your God! He is the One to whom all things heading as the Heir. He is the One whom has made all things and all your times. And He is the One that that calls us not to forget Him or diminish Him in any way as it is written in Deuteronomy 4:9;

*Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.*

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May our prayer indeed be, “Lord, let me know myself and keep my soul with diligence so that I may not forget the things which my heart has come to know – especially the greatness of Your salvation in the glorious person of Your Son Jesus Christ. May such things never depart from my heart all the days of my life and may I make them known to my family, my friends and even my enemies – for Your glory Lord – Amen.”

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## *Soli Deo Gloria*

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