
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...

I. How Would You Define God?

How would you define “God?” Or to ask the question another way, “What makes God – God? It seems like such a simple question and yet can such a question be answered so simply? A very base and generic definition of God is this – “God is the chief or supreme being.” In the most simplistic of language – no one is greater, no one is above and no one is more powerful than God. He is supreme. The truth of the matter is that we cannot come up with a complete or exhaustive definition or explanation of God. How can we who are finite (limited in knowledge and ability) ever adequately explain the Infinite (unlimited in knowledge and ability) One?

Yet, we are obligated to know God in terms of what He has revealed to us in His Holy Word. And while there are a number of attributes or characteristics contained in the Scriptures that reveal God to be God, attributes like His omnipresence (His ability to be everywhere present), His omniscience (His knowing of all things past, present and future) and His omnipotence (His ability or power to do anything consistent with His nature) – such qualities all ultimately point to one key consideration – the vast superiority and supremacy of God over all things.

There is another word that we often use to describe this supreme nature of God and that is the word “Sovereign.” What makes God – God then, is that He is absolutely sovereign over all things. To be sovereign is to be in the highest or supreme position of power, authority and purpose. These three ideas find their verification within the testimony of Scripture and in part, give us a good starting place with which to define God.

1. *God is supreme in position*

This means that God is above all persons, all things, and all places.

Deuteronomy 10:14

Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it.

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Isaiah 40:15-17

15 Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, And are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; Behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust. 16 Even Lebanon is not enough to burn, Nor its beasts enough for a burnt offering. 17 All the nations are as nothing before Him, They are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless.

2. God is supreme in power (authority)

This means that God commands all angels, all humans, all impersonal creatures and things.

1 Chronicles 29:11-12

11 Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all. 12 Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone.

Psalm 103:19

The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all.

God's supremacy extends down to the very truth that nothing exists apart from the control of God.

Deuteronomy 32:39

See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal, and there is no one who can deliver from My hand.

3. God is supreme in purpose

This means that God both brings and will bring all things to pass that He has ordered and determined to do.

Isaiah 14:24

24 The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand...27 For the

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LORD of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?

Ephesians 1:11

also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

II. What Makes God – God?

If it can be boiled down to a word concerning what makes God – God, then we must conclude that He reigns and rules in absolute supremacy in and over all things.

As we come then to Hebrews 1:2a-3, we see the author here begin a revelation of the person and work of Jesus Christ. These pictures are meant to show the reader one thing – the absolute supremacy of Jesus Christ over the Old Testament prophets as well as over all that is about to follow in this letter. The author wants us to see the supremacy of Christ and in so doing, he reveals to us a most important truth – the very deity of Christ. For if only God possess supremacy and here Christ is presented as supreme, then it naturally follows that Christ, the Son of God, is indeed God the supreme.

In other words, let the reader and student of this letter understand, the reason why Jesus Christ is better than the prophets, the angels, the priesthood, and all other things is because Jesus is God. In verses 2b-3 we see revealed to us something about the deity of Christ. In these verses we see the author unveil more completely the work and person of the Son of God. But whereas verses 1-2a were comparative, the author now quickly moves his readers to see Christ in the superlative. The author is not content to simply present Jesus as better than what came before. Rather he now reveals Jesus as more than better – He is the absolute best. And to convey this truth, in just one and a half verses, we are present with a sevenfold description of the work and person of Jesus Christ. This sevenfold description is marvelously graphic and eloquent. These descriptions are like seven separate photographs, each revealing a different side or angle of Jesus and each building a more complete, a more wonderful and a more compelling portrayal of the awesome beauty of the Son of God. Each of these pictures tell us how and why Christ is best or superior to all others. For in verses 2b-3 we see the supremacy of Christ...

1. As the Heir
2. As the Creator

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3. As the Radiance of God
4. As the Image of God
5. As the Sustainer
6. As the Purifier
7. As the Sovereign

We only have time to consider the first of these pictures this morning and pick up the others in the messages ahead. But before we start this examination, let me present to you a practical reason why it behooves us to understand well Christ in light of these descriptions. What happens if we have a diminished or deficient view of God in general and of Christ more specifically? Such, I submit to you, is our own recipe for personal disaster. For where we possess a diminished or deficient view of Christ we will come to also possess the following three malevolent attitudes.

1. We rob God of His authority in our lives.

If our view of God and His word is lacking, we will not come to Him and truly repent of behavior that is not glorifying and is inconsistent with God. We will begin to create and justify rules and standards of our own devise and ultimately to our own detriment.

2. (related to the first) We come to believe that we have no responsibility to God.

Our hearts will begin to conclude that we can do what we want, when we want and no one can tell us we are wrong.

3. We rob God then of His supremacy

For as we noted, the Scriptures clearly teach that God alone rules over all. When we have a diminished view of God and subsequently of Jesus, we come to believe that we are in control. Then we fail to look to and consider God and His ways – again to our own detriment.

To oppose such attitudes, we must come to know God and specifically our Lord Jesus Christ as being the absolute Supreme Being to whom we owe our allegiance and our very lives. The truth is that we tend to have little difficulty accepting the absolute supremacy of Christ over all things, yet we often deceive ourselves into thinking we can deny this supremacy over certain areas of our lives. We fool ourselves by trying to ignore the reality of His Lordship over every aspect of our thoughts, our words and our deeds. We must have a renewed

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vision of the supremacy and sovereignty of Christ and our author graciously obliges us with this sevenfold picture of Christ.

III. Christ the Heir

“...whom He appointed heir of all things...” (v. 2)

The first picture of Christ given to us, that shows His supremacy, is that He is the One true heir or inheritor of all things. This means that everything that exists will find its ultimate purpose and meaning only when it comes under the final ownership and control of Jesus Christ.

A. What is an “Heir”?

The word for “heir” in our text is a compound word, *kleronomos*, two words put together to give a fuller meaning. The first word is *kleros*, which means “lot” or “die” used to determine what someone is to receive. It came to refer not simply to the process of “casting lots” but of the actual item or items that were received. The second word is *nomos* which means to “parcel out” or “give”. The word “nomos” is a term usually used to describe the “law” of God as it was God who gave or parceled the law out to His people. **An heir then is one who obtains a lot or portion of something.**

According to our text, what is this particular “heir” to receive? Nothing too dramatic, only “*all things.*” What exactly is included in all things? One translation of this portion of the verse reads, “*to the Son he has ordained that all creation shall ultimately belong*” (Phillips). For while the word “heir” does speak of one who “receives” an inheritance, it was also used to convey the idea of sole ownership. To be the “heir” was not simply to be the benefactor of the inheritance, but note this, also the executor of the inheritance. Sometimes, if a parent dies prior to their children being of legal age, the inheritance will be put into what we call a trust, with another person being the executor, the one who manages and maintains that inheritance. With Christ, however, there is no other executor and there are no others who can rightly or solely make claim to the inheritance of “*all things.*” Why is Jesus supreme over the prophets and all others who are to be revealed in this letter? He is supreme because to Him alone has been granted the rights as the sole possessor of “*all things.*”

B. This “Heir” is to be seen as God

Now perhaps this is not so seemingly a reference to Christ’s deity, until we remember again Deuteronomy 10:14, “*Behold, to the LORD your God belong*

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heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it.” In Christ, the heavens and the earth still belong exclusively to the LORD our God, it is simply that in the person of Jesus Christ we have the executor and possessor of these things. **So, the idea of heirship is meant to exalt Christ as the sole possessor and head over all things – to reveal Him as God.** The author here is telling us that “all things” are moving toward Christ to be possessed and ruled by Him. For to be the heir also then means to be Lord. Turn to Galatians 4:1 where we read, “Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner [gk – Lord] of everything...” Christ is the heir and He is not a child, but He is certainly owner and Lord of everything.

C. How is it that Christ is the Heir?

He is heir by virtue of two things. **First our text teaches us that He is heir by nature** – in that He is the Son. According to our text, and going back for just a moment, He is the Son. Being the Son of God, He possesses all the attributes, character, and nature of God so that He can rightly say in John 14:9, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” This is a clear reference to His supremacy for His is God.

Second, Christ is also revealed to be heir in this verse by having been appointed. The word “appointed” means “ordained or previously determined.” As in our English translation, this word “appointed” is in the past tense, meaning that sometime in the past this action of appointment was made and settled by God. The linguists call this a “timeless aorist” as it refers to a counsel and determination that was made prior to the beginning of time. The idea is that before the foundations of the earth the Godhead, that is the Father, Son and Spirit, determined and ordained that Jesus would not only come to the earth to be the sacrifice for sin, but also that He would become the recognized individual of the Trinity who would both redeem humanity (“even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.” - John 17:2) and redeem creation (Romans 8:19-22) to Himself. Sometimes we tend to think of Christ death as only having reference and purpose to the redemption of man. However, the Scriptures present us with the parallel truth that Christ’s death also has a reference and a purpose to creation, which was affected and corrupted by the sin that man brought into the world. Isaiah 24:5-6 says,

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5 The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant. 6 Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty...”

The Fall of man into sin and its subsequent demise upon the creation was not an unknown surprise to the mind of God. He planned for it and planned to restore from the effects of sin both man and creation. Romans 8:20-23 says,

20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

So, in this Trinitarian counsel it was determined that Jesus would not only then redeem all things, but also that in Jesus all things would come to Him, finding their ultimate purpose and meaning in Him.

D. This “Heir” Fulfills Old Testament Prophecy

Again then in Hebrews 1:2a we read, *“whom He appointed heir of all things...”* This is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. In Isaiah 9:6 we are told *“For a **child** will be born to us, a **son** will be given to us...and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”* This is another way of saying that this Son is God and to this Son all things will be given.

Turn to Psalm 2 where we see another reference to the heirship of the Son. In verse 8 we read, *“Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.”* Just above, in verse 7, the LORD refers to Messiah as Son. The point is this – **do not have a diminished view of the Son – recognize Christ’s Supremacy as the Heir of God.** He is superior to the prophets and to every other thing by virtue that He alone is the rightful “heir” or possessor of all things, including you and me. Jesus is truly Lord and Jesus truly knew that all that belonged to the Father were His as Son (John 16:15).

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IV. The Benefit of being “in” the “Heir”

Now, before we close out this thought, let us rejoice in some incredible considerations and applications. While it is true that Christ is the sole and only right inheritor of all things, the plan and purpose of God has provided us with an equally grand and glorious truth. Turn with me to Romans 8 once again. Many are familiar with the opening verse –

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

What a blessed thought, that a person could have complete peace and rest in God. Even though sin has permeated and so affected us, that there is a place, or better stated, a person in whom we can experience “no condemnation.” Guilt, remorse, anger, frustration for ungodly behavior all can be eliminated - note the text – *“in Christ Jesus.”* Answers to the problems and effects of sin will not find complete and satisfying answers in the temporary pleasures of the world, or in the psychologies of man or in the medications of physicians, but only in the person of Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to be “in Christ”? To be “in Christ” is negatively seen in verse 5 as those who are **not** “according to the flesh [who] set their minds on the things of the flesh” but rather are “those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.” In verse 11 we read, *“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”* How do you know if the Spirit of God dwells in you? The end of verse 13 tell us that if you are living *“by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body..”*

What does this have to do with Christ being “heir of all things”? If we are “in Christ” putting to death the sinful deeds of the body, then Romans 8:14 and 16 tells us we are “sons of God” and “children of God.” Now look at verse 17, *“and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”* James 2:5 says that *“God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him.”* Are you a child of God, putting to death the sinful deeds and habits of this body? If you are, then you are an heir with Christ. All the things that are promised to the Son as heir, are yours by virtue of your relationship to Christ. Are you living up to your position as a co-heir with Christ? Notice that Romans 8 continues this theme stating in verse 32, *“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”* He will give us all things as we move

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and live and have our being in Christ. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 3:21-23. There we read this,

21 So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, 23 and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.

Here we learn that all things belong to us only if we what? Belong to Christ. We must not have or entertain diminished or defective views of our God. Here the author of Hebrews wants to clarify and purify his reader's vision of Christ. He reigns in supremacy for He is the sole worthy heir of all things. And to be the sole and worthy heir, He must be God Himself. And mankind has been given an invitation not only to recognize this vision and depiction of the Son of God as heir, but also to be a participant by being "in Christ." Dearly beloved, make sure that you are truly "in Christ" – truly saying no to ungodliness and worldly desires – truly living sensible, righteously and godly in the present age (Titus 2:12). Repent of known sins and cry out to God with the words of the Psalmist, "23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; 24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting."

Soli Deo Gloria

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