

Hebrews 1:3

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[0 : 00] Amen. I guess to think this evening for a short while about this verse 3 that we read in Hebrews chapter 1. Speaking about Christ who being a brightness of his glory and the express image of his person.

And upholding all things by the word of his power when he had by himself purged our sins. Sat down on the right hand of the majesty on the high.

The first thing that we see is that the context of this third verse is that Christ is the conclusion of all the preparation God has made before.

God with sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets. Happened these last days spoken unto us by his son. Now as far as Jewish rabbis were concerned, the mindset was concerned.

There was the present age, this world, this time. And there was the age to come. In other words, heaven, its glory, and the messianic kingdom. And when the Messiah appeared, that was reckoned to usher in the sort of transitional period between the present time and the ages to come.

[1 : 15] In other words, the last days of this present world. Because all the preparation is done. All that God has been working to lead up to is now at an end.

The Messiah has come. And now we're in the last days of this world. And in a sense, the beginning of the messianic age. The kingdom of God coming.

Well, of course, this is exactly what Jesus himself said. When he appeared on earth, he said, you know, repent and believe the gospel. The kingdom of God is come unto you. So in sundry times and by diverse manners, the Lord had spoken in the past by the prophets.

Now, some take these verses as a proof that, for example, the gifts of tongues and prophecy and healings and all these things, that these have now ceased. The likelihood is that they have ceased in our present setting and culture and church situation.

And evidence from around the world seems to be that when new churches are planted in places where nobody has ever heard the gospel before, it is not unknown for such gifts of the spirit, such powers of healing, perhaps miracles, use of tongues, perhaps, for all we know, or even such instances as people being brought back from, as it were, the dead by these miracles and means that the Lord uses, as it were, to establish his power amongst a new people.

[2 : 44] But as the gospel becomes established, the church takes deeper root in the culture, the word of God is translated into the languages of these people, it becomes more settled, as it were.

And the need for such gifts and special signs and wonders, as it were, ceases. So it's not that they've ceased altogether, it's just that they often cease when a church, when the gospel becomes settled, when it has the written word of God, the power of his spirit working through his word.

So although this opening verse is often used as proof positive the gifts have ceased, we can't really take it as that because apart from anything else, you know, it's talked about in the last days he's spoken by his son.

After Jesus appeared in the earth, after Jesus ascended into heaven, you still have people with, for example, the gifts of prophecy in the Acts of the Apostles.

Agabus, for example, is mentioned as having prophesied the famine that would come in the days of Claudius Caesar. Others have Philip the Evangelist, his daughters have gifts of prophecy and so on.

[3 : 57] The apostles undertook miraculous healings, they spoke with tongues after Jesus had ascended into heaven. So we can't say the coming of the Lord means all other means have ceased.

But it is bringing them to a conclusion. Certainly, although other people have the gifts of prophecy in the Acts of the Apostles, the prophets, we might say with a capital P, ceased with the coming of

Christ.

They are all prophesying up to and including an event. It's like, you know, if you're looking at a program on the TV, for example, and you might see, they might show a wee clip or a wee trailer of a program that's coming next week.

And they might show that several times in the days running up there. But once the program has been, don't keep showing the wee clips afterwards. It's all to get you to lead up to the actual main events.

If you're going to a particular event, people issue an invitation or they issue a program or whatever. But once it's been and done, those programs are nothing other than a memento of the events.

[5 : 00] Jesus himself says, you know, for all the prophets, Matthew 11, verse 13, all the prophets of the law prophesied until John. John the Baptist is the culmination of the prophets with a capital P, we might say.

And if you will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. You remember, of course, how at the end of Malachi, it says, Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

So all the prophets are leading up to the appearance of God himself, who hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the words, which again indicates to us, reminds us, that the work of creation is not the work merely of the Father.

It is the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. It says here, by whom? By whom? Jesus, God the Son, he made the words. And we know from Genesis chapter 1, of course, that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the water.

So the Spirit is involved, the Son is involved, the Father is involved. God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all three persons of the Trinity are involved in the work of creation. So it brings us then to this description of Christ, who?

[6 : 19] Being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person. If Christ is the brightness of God's glory, then obviously when God appears on earth in the person of his Son, that glory must, of necessity for a time, be somewhat veiled.

Now I know it's hymn writers and others that would put, you know, veiled in flesh the Godhead see. But that is true. Because something of his glory, something of his brightness is veiled by his flesh. It has to be. Otherwise, we simply couldn't have borne it. If you think of how, when Moses came down from the mountain, he had to veil his face. Because it shone so brightly.

The skin of his face shone. And that was just reflected glory. He had been in the presence of the glory of God. And so his face was shining with this glory.

He was reflecting that glory back. It wasn't original to Moses. It wasn't shining out of him. It was reflected back from him. Like the moon reflects the light of the sun.

[7 : 31] Great brightness of the moon you can get on a full moonlit night. But it's not its own light. It is reflected. So it is with Moses. But with Christ, it is shining out from him.

Now you get brief glimpses of when his glory is revealed. The Mount of Transfiguration, for example. When it's though the curtain of heaven is pulled apart. And he shines with this glory. And his clothes are transformed whiter than any soap or fuller soap could ever, ever make them. And there's no whiteness on earth that could make them shine with such glory.

And he positively pours out this radiance. And the disciples can't look on his glory because it is so great. And there's Moses and Elijah talking with him there.

So the brightness of his glory, which is veiled somewhat for almost all of his time upon earth. Veiled by the presence of his flesh.

[8 : 32] Veiled by the light. And yet, it's a speculation. And we can perhaps speculate, perhaps reverently if we could do that. If the brightness of God's glory is during that time on the earth, does that mean that in heaven itself, something of the glory of the Trinity is diminished?

I don't want to use the word diminished. Is the sort of brightness of the volume turned down a bit? Because God's brightness of glory is down upon earth. Logically, mathematically, we'd think there must be some diminution of the brightness of God's glory in heaven.

If Christ, the brightness of his glory is upon earth. But that, you know, such speculation is, it's idle to an extent. You know, it's rather like saying, well, if the sun were reduced by X amount of brightness, we still wouldn't be able to look at it anyway.

But, you know, it's a calculation that is beyond our understanding. But it's just a thought, you know, the brightness of God's glory is walking the earth. Then, to some extent, we would think there must be perhaps a reduction in glory.

Is heaven's glory made less glorious because Christ walked the earth? Or is it perhaps that the presence of God amongst man increases the glory of God?

[9 : 58] He is the brightness of his glory. And we may mention in prayer of how it says in Malachi, you know, Unto you that fear my name shall the sun, S-U-N, of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.

And ye shall go forth and grow up. Or that word is translated, it means leap or frisk as calves of the stall. Now, the sun of righteousness arisen with healing in his wings.

It is unto you that fear my name, it says. Now, it's Malachi chapter 4, verse 1, the immediately preceding verse says, Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven.

And all the proud, yea, and all that do wicked, they shall be stubble. And the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

But unto you that fear my name, shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.

There is a contrast here. A contrast of how the one and the same God, one and the same Christ, one and the same Savior, can be both the brightness of glory, the sun of righteousness, with healing in his wings to one group of people and to the other.

[11 : 12] It's destruction, it's damage. It's the worst thing that can happen to them. Now, this is not an anomaly. Secondly, God throughout Scripture is always not either or, but both and.

We see, for example, in Genesis where Lot is fleeing from Sodom and Gomorrah. And he pleads with the Lord that he can flee to Zohar, this little city.

And the angels say, you know, well, hurry up because we can't do anything until you're safe there. Escape hasty, escape thither. I cannot do anything until I become thither. Therefore, the name of the city was called Zohar.

And we read it in Genesis 19, 23. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zohar. So the sun rose in its usual benevolent way upon Zohar.

But the very next verse is, Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven. The same source of this gentle, warming light is the same source of this judgment and fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

[12 : 21] Likewise, in Exodus 14, we read of when the children of Israel are about to cross the Red Sea. And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, this is Exodus 14 at verse 19, removed and went behind them.

And the pillar of the cloud went from before their face and stood behind them. And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel.

And it was a cloud and darkness to them, that is to the Egyptians, but it gave light by night to these, in other words, to the Israelites, so that the one came not near the other all the night.

That same cloud that comes between the Lord's people and their enemies is darkness to the one and it is light to the other. The son of righteousness is healing in his wings to the one, destruction to the other.

The sun is risen upon Zohar, but the fire and brimstone comes down upon Sodom and Gomorrah. It is not and or or, it is both and. Remember how Paul writes it, I think it's the Corinthians, I haven't got the exact reference in front of me.

[13 : 35] You know, it says to the one we are the savor of life unto life, to the other the savor of death unto death. It's the same gospel. It's the same message. But to some it is death and darkness because they want nothing to do with the Lord.

To the others it is light and beauty and glory. Who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person.

The express image of his person. Now Jesus said to the disciples, he that had seen me had seen the Father. Philip said, I don't show us the Father, it suffice it us. Jesus said, I don't know, I've been so long time with you and yet it's not known me, Philip.

He that had seen me had seen the Father. How saith thou then, show us the Father. Do you want to know what God is like? You look at Jesus. And you think, well that's okay for those who saw him.

But we shouldn't really get hung up on what were his physical features like. Jesus is not who he is to us because of his physical appearance or his height and his weight or the colour of his eyes.

[14 : 41] Or whether or not he had a beard or what clothes he wore or whatever it might have been. It is the kind of man that he is. And the kind of man he is, is the God man.

God in the flesh. You want to know what God is like? You look to Jesus. And we might think, well yes, we knew that. But when you think about it, when you think about the Lord in his glory.

And the Lord coming in his power. Then, you may be totally different from me. But my immediate reaction is a sense of fear. Okay? A sense of trepidation.

Anxiety. And the Lord coming in his power and glory. James, we should be afraid. Because this is the Lord in all his glory. But when you think about Jesus. In the days of his flesh.

Yes, when he's coming in power and glory and blazing eyes and all the holy angels. Yes, that's pretty scary too. When you think about Jesus in the days of his flesh. We always, do we not, think of him as one approachable.

[15 : 42] One who, if he looked into our eyes, would understand completely. All the hurts. All the fears. All the hopes and the loves. He would see completely.

And seeing completely. He would love completely. He would understand us. If we were to take the hand of Jesus. To sit down with him. Before we even opened our mouth.

We would sense that he knew everything about us. This gentleness. Which we don't automatically associate. With some of the other descriptions of the Lord.

Perhaps in the Old Testament. But also in the New. And he's coming in his glory. And so on.

Gentleness. We know to be a feature of the Lord.

And yes, there's descriptions of it there in the Psalms and so on. But personified in Jesus. He's not just the brightness of his glory. He is the express image of his person.

[16 : 41] And bearing in mind that God does nothing by accident. Nor does he really do anything by reaction. As though he hasn't seen what's going to happen already. It means that God from all eternity.

Intended to reveal what he was like. Through his son Jesus. He intended people to see a side of the living God.

That perhaps they had not reckoned with before. There is a sense in which the Jews before the coming of Christ. They recognized something of the holiness of God.

Perhaps yes, they took God for granted a lot of times. As we ourselves often do, no doubt. To our shame. They trembled before the Lord in his power. Sometimes when they appear.

They caused the Lord to turn away from them many times. But this sense of the approachableness. The gentleness. The humanity of God.

[17 : 37] This comes out ultimately. And perfectly. Only in the person of Jesus Christ. Who being the brightness of his glory.

And the express image of his person. And upholding all things by the word of his power. The express image of his person. This is what God is like.

Often perhaps we think of God in more fearful terms. Yes, it's right that we should have a holy fear of the Lord. It's right that we should have due reverence. But ultimately.

Most of us. When we actually think about God. Don't need to be told. To be afraid of him. Don't need to be told to fear the Lord.

We only actually have to seriously start thinking about it. And there's plenty of that awe. Plenty of that godly dread. But when we think about Jesus.

[18 : 36] Do we not think of him in terms of his humanity. Of his approachableness. Of his understanding. Of his gentleness. It's not that he's ever going to just wave away our sins.

And say oh dear dear. It doesn't matter. God loves you anyway. Just carry on what you're doing. He never does that with anyone. He saves the woman taken in adultery. From what some might consider.

The legally just requirement. Punishment for her sin. But he knows the whole story. He says no man can condemn you. Neither do I can condemn you. And he says go and sin no more.

And then he talks about for example. The woman who wept over his feet. He says you know. She has been forgiven much.

So she loves much. Because yes she has lots of sins. Men have sinned. Men and women have sinned. Lots of. Everybody's got sins. But not everybody recognizes it. She knew her sins.

[19 : 32] And she had forgiveness for her sins. And she loved much. As a result of that. This is the Jesus. We see revealed. In the gospel accounts. Ergo.

This is what God. Is actually like. The express image. Of his person. Upholding all things. By the word of his power. At the same time. As he is this. Gentle. And meek. And approachable. And kind.

And loving soul. That even a child. Would feel comfortable. To run up into his arms. And to sit in his lap. And be enfolded in his embrace. While he told them stories.

Or talked to them. Or whatever. Jesus to a child. Is one of the most. Most endearing. Images that we can have. Of God the son. And it's not untrue.

[20 : 28] But it's not the only. Side of the story. Jesus is so gentle. And the Lord is so approachable. And merciful. Not because he is weak.

He is meek. But he's not weak. He chooses. To let go. As it were. Of the vast majority. Of his power.

He chooses. To empty himself. He chooses. To veil. The brightness. To his glory. Just so. That he is. So approachable. By the likes of us.

Sinners. The needy. The weary. The ill. Those afflicted. By ailments. Physical. Spiritual. Mental. Whatever. He makes himself. Meek.

And approachable. But never be fooled. That thereby. He doesn't have power. All power. He says. Is given unto me. In heaven and earth. And upholding all things.

[21 : 23] By the word. Of his power. It is he who maintains. The balance. And the strength. And the way. Of the world.

Until its conclusion. It is sustained. By his power. By the word. Of his power. Colossians chapter 1. Verse 17.

Tells it this way. He is before all things. And by him. All things. Consist. You cannot. Take Jesus. Out of the equation.

And still expect the world. To carry on. Spinning on its axis. And everything. Just to be fine. It will implode. It will not be maintained. Or upheld. This balancing.

Of all the planets. And stars. And space. It's not just something. Push a button. Sit back. And relax. The Lord. Maintains all this. He sustains it.

[22 : 16] And all things. Consist. In him. By the word. Of his power. When he had himself. Purged our sins. Sat down.

On the right hand. Of the majesty. On high. Notice that word. By himself. It's not. We who did it. It is he who did it.

On our behalf. And he. Alone. Who purged. And purified. Our sins. Now the writer. Of the Hebrews. Is saying. Our sins. Because. He's saying.

All of us. It is making the assumption. That we who read. And we who think. Upon these things. Are either already. Partakers. Of this great grace. Or the invitation.

Is there to us. As sinners. That this is an offer. Christ makes. That he himself. Purges away. Our sins. You don't have to. Take boxes. You don't have to.

[23 : 10] Follow a certain. Code of righteousness. To earn enough. Points with the Lord. You never could. It is he himself. Who has purged. Away our sins. And when he had done it.

He sat down. On the right hand. Of the majesty. On high. If he is. At the right hand. Of the father. Then. As we've mentioned.

I think in the past. When you think about. The disciples saying. Oh Lord. Let us sit in your right hand. On your left. Well. Who is on the left hand. Of Jesus. In glory. It is the father. We don't know. Who is on his right hand. We're not told. But it is for whom. It is being prepared. Maybe it is the. Personification of the spirit. We don't know. But the fact is. The father is at his left.

Because he is at the right hand. Of the majesty. On high. No apostle. Is worthy. To take the place. Of the father. No sinner. Ever. Would be. No wonder.

[24 : 04] Jesus doesn't get us to. Yeah. No bother. That's fine. Just get my father. A shift. And you can come and sit here. Yeah. James and John. No bother. But no. He is sat down.

On the right hand. Of the majesty. On high. This sitting down. Is significant. Not only does it imply. Kingship. But it also implies. Completion.

Completion. Of his work. He is sat down. Because. It is finished. It is done. He had purged. Our sins. And now he is sat down. Mentioned in the past.

Of course. Several times. No doubt. That in the tabernacle. Now you've got the altar. You've got the equipment. For the sacrifices. You've got the altar of incense. You've got all the stuff.

That the priests would need. But you don't find any seats. You don't find any chairs. Or benches. In the tabernacle. Or in the temple itself. Yes.

[24 : 59] We read that Eli. Was seated. In the tabernacle. And when. When Hannah came in. And prayed. Yes. He was there. But. Implication is. Sort of. That was brought in.

But. The actual furniture. Of the tabernacle. Did not include seats. Not a temple. Because the priests. Were to be ever serving. They were to be standing. Serving.

Standing. Praying. Standing. Offering the sacrifices. They were to be. About. The king's business. Sitting down. Was not for the servants. Sitting down. Is for the master.

Sitting down. Is for the king. In his court. His servants. Stand about him. And when he in himself. Purged our sins. He sat down. On the right hand.

Of the majesty. On high. He made so much better. Than the angels. The servants. The ministering spirits. He is so much higher. Than they. So he then.

[25 : 53] Is the brightness. Of God's glory. He is the express. Image of his person. God always intended. To reveal himself. In this way. So that sinners like us.

Would know. Not just. He that had seen me. Had seen the father. If he hadn't seen him physically. But we can see him. With the eye of faith. As we read. As we contemplate.

His word. This is what God is like. God is revealed. In his son. Jesus Christ. This is the gentleness. In which he comes. This is the meekness. As the babe of death. The helplessness. As the man of Galilee. The approachable one. The gentle one.

The caring one. The one who is always. The one who is always. The one who is always. The one who is always. The one who is always. The one who is always. The one who is always. Perfectly just. Rather than perfectly. The legalist. He takes justice.

[26 : 47] To its glorious height. Crowned with the love. Of the Lord. This is what God. Is like. This is the express.

Image. Of his person. He has finished. His work. We will not see him. With the eyes of flesh. Until and unless. He comes again.

Before we leave this world. If we are called. Hence. Before he returns. We will see him. With the eyes of glory. But the same glory. The same God.

Is joy. To those who are his. And dread. And fear. And terror. To those who are not. It is the same God. It is no.

Contradiction. In terms. Often made reference. To Revelation. Chapter 1. Verse 7. Behold. He come out of the clouds. And every eye. Shall see him. And they also. Which pierced him.

[27 : 43] And all kindreds of the earth. Shall wail. Because of him. Even so. Amen. That doesn't mean. Every single soul. But people of all nations. And tribes. And tongues.

Will wail. When they see him. Because they'll realize. It was all true. It won't be every single soul. But rather. As we see in Revelation. 13. Verse 8. All that dwell upon the earth.

Shall worship him. That is the beast. Whose names are not written. In the book of life. Of the lamb. Slain from the foundation of the world. Those whose names are written.

In the lamb's book of life. When they see him come. They won't wail. They will rejoice. They will delight. To see him. As he is. This. Is the brightness.

Of his glory. This is the express. Image of his person. This is what God. Is like. No wonder. He is the crowning glory. Of all the prophets.

[28 : 36] That have gone before. And how can you follow that? How can you pretend. 600 years later. That oh. Another prophet appears. Who's the final prophet. Of God.

And here's this word. That God has given him. All these other prophets. All these other religions. All these other gurus. And so. How can you follow. The brightness. Of God's glory.

The express. Image of his person. Take all the cheap. Invitations away. This. Is what God. Is like. In the purse. Of his son. In Christ.

And in Christ alone. That is.