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Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

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The Glories of Christ Captured in Words

Hebrews 1:1-3

One of the most exciting moments in any woman's life is the moment her husband proposed to her and produced a diamond ring as proof of his sincerity. For years, I've talked to couples about how that moment happened, and when they received their diamond engagement ring. One friend of mine hid the engagement ring in a spectacular conch shell on a beach on the northern California coastline and had a friend watch it from a hidden distance while he went and got his soon to be fiancée and took her for a leisurely stroll at sunset along that beach. She saw the conch shell, walked over to it just as the sun was setting, turned it over and the ring fell out into her hand! What a dramatic moment! Definitely risky, though.

The second most memorable effort was the most cowardly I ever heard... this friend took his girl for a drive and had taped his proposal. He put the cassette tape in the player and played it while he pretended to get something out of the trunk of the car. The diamond ring had been hidden in the glove compartment. The recorded proposal instructed her to put the ring on her finger if she accepted! He came back a minute later, she was wearing the ring with a big smile and all was well!

I've often wondered why people settled on a diamond ring as the symbol of the engagement... perhaps it is the enduring nature of the diamond and its beauty. I recently looked into the history of diamond cutting and discovered some fascinating things. The cutting of facets into a diamond stone in perfect symmetry allows the stone to catch light rays and radiate them brilliantly to the eye. Because of the hardness of the diamond, a perfectly symmetrical cut was impossible... nothing was hard enough to cut diamond. So jewelers would simply cleave the diamond along its natural break lines and they broke where they would. But the gemstone was not so radiant. That is until 1475 when Louis van Berquem, a Flemish stone-polisher from [Antwerp](#), Belgium, introduced the concept of absolute symmetry in the placement of facets on the stone, facilitated by his revolutionary invention of a diamond-cutting and polishing wheel called a *scaif*. The *scaif* used a rotating polishing wheel, or "lap" that was impregnated with olive oil and diamond dust, which would slowly grind away each facet's surface.

The Duke of Burgundy, Charles the Bold (1433-1477) was so impressed with van Berquem's revolutionary "Perfect Cut," that he became a patron, paying van Berquem that handsome sum of 3,000 ducats for three perfect-cut diamonds. With this act, the profession of the "brillianteer" was born... a skillful craftsman whose ability to grind perfect facets in the hardest of all substances, the diamond, made that stone come alive with perfect fire and radiance.

In our magnificent text today, I think of Jesus Christ as a brilliant gemstone with multiple perfect facets which catch the perfect light of God and make it shine radiantly in our hearts.

Hebrews 1:1-3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

Context: overall goal of the Author of Hebrews: to persuade the Jewish professors of faith in Christ how senseless it would be to forsake Christ and to return to the Old Covenant. He thus immediately launches into a display of the infinite superiority of Christ... superiority to the prophets and the angels... those messengers God had previously chosen to impart the Old Covenant

Today we're going to see Jesus as the flamingly brilliant radiance of God's glory... a stone with eight facets: Jesus' glory as 1) the Final Prophet, 2) the Son of God, 3) the Creator of the universe; 4) Heir of all things; 5) Display of God; 6) Sustainer of the Universe, 7) Final priest, 8) King on his throne

I. The Glory of Christ as the Final Prophet

Hebrews 1:1-2 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son

A. God Spoke... and He Still Speaks

1. In 1972, Christian thinker and apologist Francis Shaeffer wrote a work entitled *He Is There, and He Is Not Silent*
2. The fact is that God is a communicating God... HE SPEAKS

Isaiah 1:2 Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the LORD has spoken

3. From the beginning, God has spoken... He chose to create the universe by WORDS

Genesis 1:3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

Seven times in Genesis 1, God speaks and some new aspect of creation springs into existence

4. But most significantly for us, God has chosen to communicate to us by words
 - a. Genesis 2: He communicates His will to Adam in the Garden, concerning the trees... Adam's freedom and Adam's restriction
 - b. Genesis 3: He judges Adam and Eve and the serpent for their sins
 - c. Genesis 4: He warns Cain about impending sin, and then after Cain murders Abel, He speaks to Cain and judges him for his sin
 - d. Genesis 6: He warns Noah about the impending flood and commands him to build an ark to save his family

Our God is a God who SPEAKS... He speaks words, and His words have power

B. How God Spoke Then

1. To our forefathers

- a. The author to the Hebrews is connecting with these Jewish professors of faith in Christ... they cherish their Jewish lineage and ancestry
- b. God spoke to the forefathers in the past... in the era of the Old Covenant
- c. Through the prophets: God's spokesmen, intermediaries between God and man

2. At many times and in various ways

- a. Audible voice
 - i) Mt. Sinai: loud and terrifying
 - ii) Mt. Horeb: (to Elijah) still, small voice
- b. Simplest, most common statement: "The word of the Lord came to _____"
- c. Dreams and visions

Daniel 7:1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream.

Ezekiel 1:1 In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day, while I was among the exiles by the Kebar River, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. ...

d. Symbols

- i) He shows Jeremiah an almond branch as a symbol of God watching to see that His word is fulfilled; then He shows Jeremiah a boiling pot, tilting away from the north as a symbol of the Babylonians about to invade from the north
- ii) He shows Amos a basket of ripe fruit as a symbol that the time is ripe for judgment on His people Israel
- iii) He commands Hosea to marry a prostitute as a symbol of Israel's spiritual adultery against Him through idols
- iv) He has Ezekiel draw a picture of Jerusalem on a clay tablet and lay siege to it, building actual siege works like battering rams against it; then Ezekiel is to put an iron pan between his face and the mock city to show that God has forsaken the city

v) He has Isaiah prophecy stripped and barefoot for three years as a sign against Egypt that they will be led away as captives by Assyria

e. Providential occurrences

i) He has the idol of Dagon fall prostrate before the Ark of the Covenant to show the Philistines (and Israel) that He is mightier than Dagon; the Philistines set up the idol again; then the next night God decapitated the idol and cut off its hands

ii) He strikes Uzzah dead for grabbing the Ark

f. Internal movement of the Holy Spirit

Isaiah 8:11 The LORD spoke to me with his strong hand upon me, warning me not to follow the way of this people.

Ezekiel 11:5 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon me, and he told me to say

g. Poetry, parables, paradoxes, mysteries, history, proverbs, commands, promises

“at many times and in various ways...”

C. God’s Final Word to the Human Race

“... but in these last days He has spoken in His Son...”

1. The key phrase: “BUT IN THESE LAST DAYS”

a. The last days refers to the final act of the drama that is Redemptive History

b. The “last days” began when God spoke this final word to the human race

2. God’s final word: JESUS

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Michael Card, “The Final Word”

You and me we use so very many clumsy words.

The noise of what we often say is not worth being heard.

When the Father’s Wisdom wanted to communicate His love,

He spoke it in one final perfect Word.

He spoke the Incarnation and then so was born the Son.
 His final word was Jesus, He needed no other one.
 Spoke flesh and blood so He could bleed and make a way Divine.
 And so was born the baby who would die to make it mine.

3. The author to Hebrews says “He has spoken IN His Son
 - a. It wasn’t just the words Jesus spoke, although that was part of it
 - b. It was WHO Jesus was, the significance of His taking on a human body and living a human
 - c. John says “the word became flesh and we BEHELD HIS GLORY...”
 - d. Just watching Jesus was seeing a message from God... Jesus’ manner, facial expressions, actions, gestures... all of it was a display of God’s glory
4. The MAIN message: the cross
 - a. Just by looking at the Son of God on the cross was a message from God directly without Jesus needing to speak a word
 - b. His death on the cross was God’s final word to the human race concerning
 - i) God’s holiness and justice
 - ii) God’s love and compassion
 - iii) God’s power to remove sin and death
 - iv) Humanity’s great sinfulness
 - v) The Law’s inability to save us
5. In these last days God has spoken to us a far clearer message than the prophets ever did... God spoke JESUS to the world

D. The Superiority of Christ to the Prophets

1. Again and again the theme of the superiority of Jesus is established in the Book of Hebrews
 - a. The rest of the chapter, the author will establish the superiority of Jesus to angels
 - b. In Hebrews 3, the author will establish the superiority of Jesus to Moses... and then the superiority of the rest Jesus gives to the rest Joshua gave Israel in the Promised Land

- c. In Hebrews 7, Jesus' priesthood will be proven greater than Aaron and his ministry greater than that of the Levites
- d. Jesus is also proven to be greater than Abraham
- 2. In Hebrews 1:1-3, Jesus is found to be a greater communication from God than that which He gave through the prophets
 - a. The prophets spoke "in the past"... Jesus speaks NOW, in these last days
 - b. The prophets spoke to the fathers... Jesus speaks to US
 - c. The prophets spoke "at many times and in various ways"... Jesus speaks once for all time at the cross

II. The Glory of Christ as Son of God

Hebrews 1:2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son

A. The Title "Son of God" is Greater Than Any Prophet

- 1. A prophet was merely a servant, a messenger of God
- 2. He was commanded by God to speak only what God commanded him to say
- 3. He was a sinner like those who listened to him
- 4. But Jesus is the Son of God

B. This is the Name and the Title of Jesus: SON

Hebrews 1:4-5 So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. ⁵For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"?

- 1. Jesus is utterly unique in relation to the Father
- 2. He is the ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

- 3. The love relationship between the Father and the Son is overwhelming and powerful, infinitely deep and perfect

At Jesus' baptism:

Matthew 3:17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

4. From eternity past through to eternity future, the Father has gazed at the Son and delighted in Him as the perfect reflection of His glory

Jonathan Edwards: “The infinite happiness of the Father consists in His enjoyment of His Son.”

5. The intimacy and perfection of their relationship is incalculable:

John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known.

“In the bosom of the Father...”

At the end of John’s Gospel, the Apostle John, the one whom Jesus loved, was reclining at the table with Jesus at the last supper, and put his head on Jesus’ chest

Jesus has had His head laying on the chest of His Father for eternity... that’s how close the Father and the Son are

Perfect intimacy:

John 5:20 For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing.

6. This includes LABOR ON THE UNIVERSE

III. The Glory of Christ as Creator of the Universe

Hebrews 1:2 through whom he made the universe.

A. The Father Made the Universe THROUGH THE SON

1. The Greek word translated “universe” in NIV is sometimes translated “ages”
2. It is more than just the earth... it is all aspects of the universe, visible and invisible

John 1:3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Colossians 1:16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

3. “Through whom”???
- a. We have seen in Genesis 1 that God created the universe by SPEAKING... “Let there be light” and there was light
- b. We have also seen that the Apostle John calls Jesus the “Word”... “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God”

- c. God the Father willed to create, then God SPOKE the creation into reality THROUGH JESUS, the word of God
4. The Father and the Son labored together
 - a. Making light
 - b. Making the sky
 - c. Making the dry land
 - d. Making the trees, vegetation, and seed-bearing plants
 - e. Making the sun, the moon, and the stars
 - f. Making the fish and the birds
 - g. Making the animals
 - h. Making man in their image... male and female
 5. The Father and the Son delight in their intimate working relationship

John 5:19-20 the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.

The Father and the Son made the Stars:

Recent trip to IMAX in Raleigh... saw a spectacular IMAX 3D movie about the repair to the Hubble Space Telescope done last year... the views of the cosmos were breathtaking... they took us through a corridor in space to a specific part of the constellation Orion, in Orion's belt... the Great Nebula in which new stars are being formed according to the Hubble Scientists

It made me worship the Lord to consider that the Father and the Son together made this immense Nebula in Orion's belt!!

B. Isaiah's Monotheism and the Creation of the Universe

Isaiah 44:24 I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself

God, and God alone created all things

God and God alone stretched out the heavens

God and God alone spread out the earth BY MYSELF

YET... Hebrews 1, Colossians 1, and John 1 all teach that God made the universe THROUGH JESUS

The only possible conclusion is that Jesus is God... that when the Father and the Son worked together in the Trinity to create the universe, it was the ONE GOD doing it BY HIMSELF in three persons!!!

IV. The Glory of Christ as Heir of All Things

Hebrews 1:2 whom he appointed heir of all things

A. God Also Appointed Christ HEIR OF ALL THINGS

1. I reversed the order from Hebrews just to arrange it in chronological order
2. God the Father created ALL THINGS through Christ
3. SO it makes perfect sense for God the Father to appoint Christ HEIR OF ALL THINGS

B. The Role of Christ as Heir

1. The Heir was frequently the “firstborn”... He would take over leadership of the family in the father’s place when the father was gone
2. The Heir would be beloved of the father; and growing up, the father would cherish the heir and train him in all the ways he was to go
3. Joseph’s coat of many colors: symbol of Jacob having chosen Joseph to be his heir
 - a. The robe was an outward glory of the favor the father had bestowed on him
 - b. Joseph would inherit his father’s possessions... the rest of Jacob’s sons would be well provided for with gifts; but the rest of the wealth would be Joseph’s to distribute as he saw fit
 - c. This is precisely why his brothers were so jealous of him
4. Two key issues: authority and ownership

C. Authority in the Universe

Matthew 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Ephesians 1:22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything

D. Ownership of the Universe

1. Jesus is Heir of all things
2. Everything in heaven and earth and under the earth is Christ's by right of an heir
3. So also we are heirs with Christ of all things... this will be our inheritance

Romans 8:17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs-- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

V. The Glory of Christ as Perfect Display of God

Hebrews 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being

A. Radiance of God's Glory

1. The sun is the center of the solar system
 - a. 93 million miles away
 - b. We cannot reach it... we cannot touch it... we cannot affect it in any way
 - c. It is immense, bright, hot, powerful, can destroy us
2. The Sun COMMUNICATES itself to the earth by light, heat, radiation across the 93 million miles
3. When you look up in the sky and see this bright yellow ball of fire, you say "I see the sun"... but you are only interacting with the light beams the sun sent across the 93 million miles of space... that light enables you to interact with the sun
4. So also when you close your eyes but lift your face toward the sky, you can feel the warmth of the sun on your face
 - a. The radiation from the sun is warming the surface of the earth
 - b. The radiation from the sun is also warming your face pleasantly
 - c. The radiation has travelled across the 93 million miles of outer space to communicate the sun to you
5. JESUS is the radiance of God's glory... He brings the Father directly to you across the infinite gap between you and God
6. The encounter with Philip

John 14:8-9 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." ⁹ Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.

B. Exact Representation of His Being

1. The Greek word is “carakter”...
2. It refers to a signet ring that people in the past used to use to seal official letters
3. A governor or a king would have a signet ring with a coat of arms or a specially engraved symbol of the man’s authority; he would put sealing wax on a document and use his signet ring to seal the letter as a clear evidence that the letter was from him
4. The mark in the wax was the EXACT REPRESENTATION of the signet ring... to look at the imprint was to see the exact lines in the signet ring
5. So Jesus is the exact representation of the Father
 - a. Jesus is as righteous as His Father
 - b. He is as holy as His Father
 - c. He is as loving as His Father
 - d. He is as wrathful as His Father
 - e. He is as patient as His Father
 - f. He is as omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent as His Father
 - g. There is not the slightest difference or division whatsoever between the will, plans, character, purposes, desires, intentions or attributes of the Father and the Son... PERFECT UNITY... PERFECT REPRESENTATION

C. The Radiance of God’s Glory will Illuminate the New Heavens and New Earth

Revelation 21:23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

VI. The Glory of Christ as Sustainer of the Universe

Hebrews 1:3 sustaining all things by his powerful word

A. The Universe is a NEEDY Universe

1. God did not create an INDEPENDENT universe, but one that NEEDS HIM EVERY MOMENT simply to continue existing
2. Deists posit a universe like a vast, complex clock that God the Creator designed, wound up and lets run... with which He never interferes

3. Biblically, if Christ withheld His active effort toward His universe for an instant, it would cease to exist

B. Christ SUSTAINS the universe

1. Every single moment of the day, every single atom in the universe is constantly held together by Christ

“In Him all things HOLD TOGETHER”

- a. If Christ stopped holding the atoms of your chair together, it would fly apart
2. This obviously has profound ethical implications for the universe: Christ was actually in some mysterious way holding together the iron of the nails that pierced his hands and feet; he actively keeps the universe together, even when that includes great suffering for himself or for those he loves
 - a. He kept Hitler’s body together every moment of his life, even while he was carrying out some of the most disgusting and wicked deeds in history
 - b. He keeps air molecules together even when it means the destruction in a tsunami or hurricane of human life or property
 - c. He keeps bullets together while they kill innocent children in war zones or in drive-by shootings
 - d. And he will sustain the existence of human souls for eternity, whether in heaven or hell
 - e. Christ is not going to annihilate anyone... everyone will spend eternity in either heaven or hell
 - f. Those who spend eternity in hell will be constantly sustained by the will of Christ
3. Christ’s ongoing active sustaining of the universe is essential to its continued existence

Revelation 4:11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

C. The Glory of Christ Established in this: Everything in the Universe NEEDS HIM

1. At every moment, we need Jesus’ effort and energy just to keep existing

Acts 17:28 'For in him we live and move and have our being.'

2. So we ought to glorify Christ greatly simply for keeping us alive and in existence

VII. The Glory of Christ as the Final Priest

Hebrews 1:3 After he had provided purification for sins

A. The Great Theme of Hebrews: The Superiority of Christ's Priestly Ministry

1. We will have AMPLE opportunity to develop this theme
2. Christ is the final, the great High Priest who shed His blood on the cross for our sins
3. His sacrifice is infinitely greater than all the animal sacrifices offered in the Old Covenant

B. Once for All Time

1. The once for all nature of that sacrifice is opened up here
2. "When he HAD PROVIDED purification for sins..."
3. In a single day, Jesus took care of all the sins of His people all over the world

C. Purification for Sins

1. Sin is a great defiler... a terrible polluter
2. Back in the 1970s, Americans were still not fully aware of the environment and the defilement of our bad habits
 - a. In 1969, industrial waste was pouring into the Cuyahoga River connecting Akron and Cleveland and turning it into an oily sludge... on June 22, the river caught fire!
 - b. That famous moment in pollution spurred a huge amount of environmental legislation
 - c. American polluters simply throwing out litter and debris from their cars on the highways were made criminal offenses
 - d. Nuclear radiation defiled the Three Mile Island power plant
3. The greatest defiler in the universe is sin... it makes us filthy in God's sight

Zechariah 3:1-4 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. ² The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?" ³ Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. ⁴ The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you."

4. Jesus blood is the great cleanser for sins

VIII. The Glory of Christ as the King on His Throne

Hebrews 1:3 he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

A. This Represents Christ the King Ruling in the Universe

1. Jesus' work was finished when He died
2. There was no more need for a sacrifice
3. Now all that was needed was His sovereign rulership over the universe
4. Christ is the perfect King of the world
5. As we've already mentioned... authority is all His

Matthew 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

B. This Sitting at the Right Hand is Mentioned a Number of Times

1. Right hand a position of influence, power, and honor

Psalms 16:11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

2. Christ sat at the right hand of God so that God could crush His enemies

Psalms 110:1 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

3. From that position, Christ intercedes for us constantly

Romans 8:34 Christ Jesus, who died-- more than that, who was raised to life-- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

4. So this position of Christ should be our constant encouragement and meditation

Colossians 3:1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

C. The Final Glory of Christ... the Right to Sit on God's Throne

Revelation 5:6-7 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

IX. Application

A. Come to Christ

1. Only in Jesus can you receive full purification for your sins
2. Sin defiles you, pollutes you, makes you feel dirty
3. In Jesus alone, by His blood shed on the cross, anyone can have their conscience cleansed from sin

B. Stay Near Christ

1. The whole point the author is making here is to urge these Jewish professors of faith in Christ not to turn their backs on Jesus, not to walk away from Him
2. So we also must not DRIFT AWAY from Christ

C. Fervent Worship

1. Look at the light streaming from each of the facets of this diamond
2. Jesus is the RADIANCE OF GOD'S GLORY!!!
3. If you want to know God, look at Jesus... fix your thoughts your minds on Him
4. He is God's final word to the human race... listen to Him, read His words, allow His words to transform you
5. He is the Son of God... intimately acquainted with the Father, able to bring you directly into the presence of God... like John, lay your head on Jesus' breast, because Jesus has laid His head on His Father's breast
6. He is the Creator of the Universe... that means that everything in the universe is His by rights... live as a steward in Jesus' world... it all belongs to Him for He made it
7. He is the Heir of All Things... He will inherit the future world from the Father and give it to the meek... "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the world"
8. He is the Display of God's glory... study Christ to know God
9. He is the Sustainer of the Universe... know that Jesus is upholding your very existence right at this moment

10. He is the final Priest who pleads the merit of His blood every day at the Father's right hand
11. He is the King on His Throne... submit to Him and obey His commands