

The Nature of the Incarnation, Part 1

Scripture: Hebrews 1:1-2

Code: 80-206

We have been recently studying in the gospel of Luke and we have completed going through the amazing historical account of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Starting out in the story we met Zacharias and Elizabeth...Zacharias a priest, Elizabeth his wife, they were very old, never able to have a child yet God miraculously allowed them to bear a son by the name of John who was to be the forerunner of the Messiah. And we then again saw the angel Gabriel who appeared to Zacharias appear to a virgin, Mary, a girl about 13 years of age to tell her that she was going to have a child without a man, that is the Holy Spirit was going to place a child in her womb and that child would be none other than the Son of God, as well as the Son of David, the One who would establish an eternal Kingdom. He would be the Savior, His name was to be Jesus because He would save His people from their sins.

And so we have followed the story of Zacharias and Elizabeth right through to the birth of John. We followed the story of Mary and Joseph right through to the birth of Jesus. And we have stood with the shepherds on the hillside. We talked about the shepherds, something about their place in society and why God may have chosen them. We talked about the angels, the host of heavenly angels that appeared.

In other words, going through Luke chapter 1 and Luke chapter 2, the birth narrative, we looked at it pretty much from the viewpoint of the world, from the viewpoint of the human perspective. We saw the wonderful, wonderful insights of Mary and her magnificat as she praised the Lord because she knew her child was to be the Savior who would even save her from her sins. And the great song of Zacharias at the end of chapter 1 in which he identifies the Messiah as the fulfillment of the Davidic promise, the Davidic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant. We saw the perspective of the coming of Messiah as the fulfillment of all the Old Testament promises. It was wonderful to see all of that through...through the eyes of Luke the writer, through the eyes of Zacharias and Elizabeth and Mary and even Joseph.

But there's another perspective on the birth of Christ. And I confess to being a bit reluctant to leave the narrative because even at spending two or three months as we have going through that narrative, we haven't come close to exhausting all that can be and ought to be said about the birth of Christ. In fact, even with Luke 1 and portion of Luke 2 and comparative passages describing His birth in Matthew chapter 1 and Matthew chapter 2 and divine commentary on the birth of Christ from John chapter 1...when you add that all together you still have very few words about the birth of Jesus

Christ, very few. And people can write dozens of volumes on the Fall of the Roman Empire and thousands of volumes on the rise of the United States of America. They can write literally volumes upon volumes about certain figures in human history.

But when it comes to the birth of Jesus Christ even in the Word of God there seems to be so little said. It is...it is really striking to think about the fact that in the gospel of Luke the actual birth of Jesus Christ is described with these words, very, very simple words, "And she gave birth to her firstborn son." That is an economy of words, believe me, about the greatest of all births, this monumental, miraculous birth, Son of God, Son of David, Son of Mary, Son of Abraham, Savior, Messiah, Lord, Christ...this is the birth of all births. And we have looked at it from the side of Luke the historian and Luke the theologian.

But the New Testament, though it doesn't spend a lot of space in the gospels defining and describing the birth of Jesus Christ, does spend time looking back at the birth of Christ and interpreting it from God's side in the epistles. When the gospels' account of the birth of Jesus Christ is over, that's not the end of the discussion. As you go through the New Testament and get in to the epistles of the New Testament, you find the writers often go back to show the divine perspective. They don't talk about angels, you're not going to find the mention of the angels in the epistles. They don't talk about shepherds. They don't talk about wise men. They don't talk about Gabriel. They don't talk about Joseph. They don't even talk about Mary. They certainly don't talk about Zacharias. They don't talk about Elizabeth. They don't talk about John. They don't talk about Bethlehem. They don't talk about a stable. They don't talk about a manger or a feed trough. They don't talk about animals. They don't talk about a star. They don't talk about Herod. They don't talk about the slaughter of the innocents. They don't talk about any of that.

When the epistles look back to the birth of Jesus Christ, all they ever talk about is Jesus Christ. And it's really very fitting because in all the birth narrative you have so very little about Jesus Christ. You look at Matthew, you look at Luke, you look at the gospel of John and it says very little about the child. Oh it tells us that the angel says the child would be Son of the Most High God. He will be the Savior. And He will be the King and He will establish His Kingdom forever. And that's all very critical. But that has to do with the fulfillment of covenant promise, Abrahamic Covenant, Davidic Covenant, New Covenant promise. But about the child Himself, we don't have any description. I said a few weeks ago, there was nothing particularly divine about the appearance of that child. It may be the way it is in Catholic art work, and it may be the way it is in Christmas cards that the baby has a halo, but that wasn't the case. There was nothing to identify this child as any other than another child who had been born, perhaps, around the same time in the same place. In fact, it wasn't possible to find this child by any feature of the child, but only by the fact that the sign indicating that this was the right child was that He would be in a manger, feed trough.

So it is true that though the narrative gives us a lot about the history and the perspective prophetically, it...regarding the child...the missing part is what would be God's perspective. We know what the shepherds thought. We know what the wise men thought. We know what Mary thought because she says so. We know what Zacharias is thinking because he defines all of that in his song of praise at the end of chapter 1. But the real question about the birth of Jesus Christ is God's perspective. And that's what I want to talk to you about this morning. I am reluctant to leave the birth narrative, I don't know if I'll ever get back to preaching on the birth of Christ again in the future, and I wouldn't want to leave it incomplete. And I think the New Testament is as reluctant to leave this narrative as I am because it continues to go back through the epistles and look at the birth of Christ from the divine perspective in identifying not a human baby in a manger, but the reality of who this child really was.

Now we could look at Romans 1, there are references in Romans 1 to the fact that the child was both the Son of David and Son of God. We could look at Galatians 4 where it tells us that in the fullness of time God brought forth His Son made of a woman. We could look at Ephesians 3 which introduces us to the idea of the mystery of Christ, that is the heretofore unknown secret of God in human flesh. We could look at Philippians 2, the great kenosis passage and talk about the self-emptying of Christ who though being in the form of God thought it not something to hold on to but relinquished it and took upon Himself the form of a man, the form of a servant and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. That's certainly definitive about Christ. We could look at 1 Timothy chapter 3 and talk about the mystery of godliness, God in human flesh, God manifest in the flesh, as Paul put it. And we could go to that noble passage in Colossians 2 where it discusses the fact that in Jesus Christ all the fullness of the Godhead was dwelling bodily...which is a sweeping and profound statement. And all of those, to one degree or another, we have studied through the years.

But there's one other passage that I think is particularly important. It is sort of the crowning jewel in the tiara of text on the divine perspective on the birth of Christ. And it's Hebrews 1. And I want you to look at that. I...I...I feel that I need to address the text of Hebrews 1, this morning, and next Lord's day and that will complete our look at the birth of Christ and then we'll move on in the narrative of the text.

I want to draw your attention to the first three verses of Hebrews 1. The writer of Hebrews, we don't know who he is. There's nothing in the epistle that identifies him. But the writer of Hebrews wasn't much for long introductions. In fact, he wasn't much for introductions period. And he had a purpose in mind when he wrote this epistle and he launches his purpose right at the very, very beginning. This is what he says. There are no greetings, there are no salutations, there are no identifications of who he is or who they are, it just goes right to the point, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets in many portions and many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son whom He appointed heir of all things through whom also He made the world and He is the radiance of His glory in 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." And here again in a brief few verses is a profound, divine description of who this child born in Bethlehem really is. And I think no study of the incarnation could in any sense be considered complete without understanding this great passage. This is the divine commentary by God Himself on the incarnation.

Now again, I want to remind you of something that continues to be an issue. It continues to be an issue. Just recently in a discussion on CNN between two quote/unquote evangelical leaders, one of them was trying to get the other one to affirm the fact that no one could go to heaven if they didn't confess Jesus as Lord and God. And the other evangelical leader refused to agree with that affirmation. So let me remind you of something that seems to be needing to find its way back into the picture here, and it is this...the heart and soul of the Christian faith is the confession that Jesus is Lord. That is the heart and soul of the Christian faith without which no one will go to heaven. Affirming in the statement Jesus as Lord, both the deity of Jesus and the sovereignty of Jesus. If you want to be saved, then you have to believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead and confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord. The decisive mark of being a Christian was and always will be the public confession that Jesus is Lord. That is the definitive confession of the Christian faith.

I was in a meeting earlier this week and a Mormon elder was speaking and he said, "It's nice to be among Christians." Nobody is a Christian who says Jesus is a created being. Jesus is Lord. That is the substantive core of Christian theology. Apart from that confession there is no hope of eternal life, no hope of heaven. And nowhere is the glorious reality of the lordship of Christ more succinctly and profoundly affirmed than in the passage I just read you. It is an immense summation, worthy of volumes more attention than we'll be able to give it. No one can become a Christian without confessing Jesus as Lord, for there is no salvation in any other name, there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved...Hebrews 4:12.

Now the letter of Hebrews, and I don't want to spend a lot of time on it, but the letter of Hebrews is obviously written to Jews. It was written after Christ's ascension which occurred around 30 A.D., as you know, and some time before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., probably some time toward the end of the 60's, just before the destruction of Jerusalem. And by that time, some Jews had come to believe in Jesus as their Messiah. Like Zacharias and Elizabeth and Mary and Joseph and others, they had come to believe that Jesus was in fact the Messiah. They had embraced Him. They had been saved and they constituted a church. We don't know where, we don't know anything about that church. The writer of Hebrews doesn't discuss issues in that church. He doesn't identify the people or any location. But it was a group of Jews, mostly true believers in Jesus. It wasn't easy because there were a lot of hostility from their community. They were alienated, unsynagogued, socially outcasts because of their faith in Jesus as Messiah.

But Hebrews was written to them. It was written to affirm that they had made the right decision. Also, associated with that community were some Jews who were intellectually convinced that Jesus

was the Christ, that Jesus was God, that Jesus was Lord. They knew it in their minds but they had never embraced it personally and they had not publicly confessed Jesus as Lord because they didn't want the alienation they had seen their friends receive. Their fear of being unsynagogued, their fear of being put out of their families, their fear of losing their jobs, their fear of paying the price of social alienation had restrained them from confessing publicly that Jesus is Lord. And so the epistle is written, also, to them to encourage them that it is the right commitment to make. And surely there were also others on the fringes who were related to these people, who didn't yet believe that Jesus was Lord and this instruction in the book of Hebrews also addresses them. The purpose of the epistle is to show the Jews that Jesus is in fact the fulfillment of all the Old Testament promises and that He is a fulfillment that is superior to all the pictures and types and representations and shadows that came before Him.

The Holy Spirit then inspired this whole epistle to encourage Jews that they were not losing anything by embracing Jesus and confessing Him as Lord. Well they would give up an earthly temple but that was about to be destroyed anyway. They would give up an earthly priesthood but that was about to end also. They would give up earthly sacrifices but they were soon over. And what they would get in exchange was a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens, a heavenly temple, what they would get in exchange was a great and eternal high priest, what they would get in exchange was a once-for-all sacrifice made by Jesus Christ on the cross that fully atoned for their sin and gave them access to the Holy of Holies, the very presence of God forever.

So the writer of Hebrews is affirming that indeed Jesus is Lord, the babe born in Bethlehem is in fact the fulfillment of all Old Testament promise. The New Covenant in Jesus is far superior to the Old Covenant. In Jesus there is a better hope, the writer of Hebrews shows, a better hope, a better covenant, a better priesthood, better promises, a better sacrifice, better substance, a better resurrection. You have in Christ a heavenly Messiah, not just an earthly man.

And so, the whole approach of Hebrews is to show the superiority of Christ to everything in the Old Covenant...everything. He will show that Jesus is better than angels, that Jesus is better than Moses, that Jesus is better than Aaron, the great high priest, that the covenant of Jesus is better than the Old Covenant, etc., etc., etc.

What you have in the three verses I read is an opening summarization basically saying Jesus is better than anything and everything. This opening statement is a statement of the preeminence of Jesus Christ that is the most concise and comprehensive in the New Testament. It's classic as a statement on the superiority of Jesus Christ. And I want us to look at this. We don't want to get too sentimental about the baby in the manger, we want to understand who really was there and we are told here.

Now I want you to see three features, and we'll kind of work through these today and finish them up next time. The first thing I want you to see is the preparation for Christ...the preparation for Christ. Then the presentation of Christ, and then the preeminence of Christ as it unfolds at the end of verse 2 and in to verse 3.

The preparation of Christ, verse 1, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets in many portions and in many ways," we'll stop at that point.

Now this is a look at the Old Testament. The Old Testament is God speaking, God speaking to the fathers, that is the ancestors of the Jews, speaking to the fathers through the means of the prophets in many portions and in many manners, or many ways. This simply looks at the Old Testament. The Old Testament was God speaking, speaking to the Jewish people, the fathers, the ancestors. He spoke through the prophets and He did it in many different ways.

Now you need to just be reminded very basically, you don't want to go in to this in any detail, that if God didn't speak we wouldn't know what we need to know. I mean, we can discern a certain amount by looking at the world around us. We can know that God is powerful, that God has an immense mind. We can understand something of His greatness, something of His immensity, something of His power, something of His intelligence just by looking at the created order around us, but we can't know Him personally. We can't know anything about Him personally. And we certainly can't have a relationship with Him. We don't know about salvation by just looking at the expressions of His created nature. So we are limited, we are literally isolated from God. "The natural man understands not the things of God because they're spiritually discerned and we're spiritually dead." So here we are in a time/space world and we can't know anything outside our time/space world.

Don't kid yourself, folks. We cannot know for sure anything outside our time/space world. People purport to do that and they have all these folks calling the psychic network, which is nothing more than deception and lies, it's nothing more than a ploy to take money out of people's pockets under false pretenses. Nobody can escape the time/space world. We are sensorially incapable of comprehending the supernatural, it's outside the dimensions where we live. We cannot identify it. We cannot understand the supernatural, it's beyond us, it's outside of us. We do not expect the bug to understand the boy who picks it up and puts it in a bottle, nor do we understand God from the human sense side.

I know there are people who think their minds can transcend time and space and wander off into the supernatural and apprehend supernatural truth. And that is a fantasy and a deception. If we're going to know the truth about God and the truth about salvation, God has to speak into our world and that's exactly what verse 1 says He did...He spoke.

He spoke long ago. At this time it had been 400 years since the Old Testament had ended...over 400 years, now you're probably in to the late 60's in A.D., approaching 500 years since God had spoken. So it was long ago that God had spoken. I told you, there hadn't been a problem in 400 years. There hadn't been angels and miracles in that long or longer. When Jesus was born this flurry of angels and miracles was something brand new, something that hadn't occurred in a long time, and never occurred at the pace and the rate that it occurred around the life and ministry of Jesus. So long ago God spoke. He spoke to the fathers.

How did He speak to the fathers? Well it says He spoke to the fathers through the prophets. And what are the prophets? Those are simply people who speak for God. And how did He do this? He did it in many portions. What does that mean? Literally "portions" means segments. If you want to know what it simply means, He did it in many books. The Old Testament has 39 books. He did it in many portions, polumeros, many different books. God spoke in Genesis and He spoke in 2 Kings and He spoke in Ezra, and He spoke in Nehemiah, He spoke in Job and He spoke in Malachi, and Haggai, and Zechariah and Psalms and Proverbs and Song of Solomon. And He spoke not only in many portions, polumeros but in many polutropos, many methods. Sometimes it was a vision, sometimes it was a dream. Some times it was a direct vocalization where God literally could be heard by the human ear. Sometimes it was indirect through the promptings of the Spirit of God in the mind of the writer. Sometimes it was through a type. Sometimes it was through a parable. Sometimes it was through a symbol. Sometimes it was through a ceremony. Sometimes it was written on stone. But God spoke and He spoke long ago, this is referring to the Old Testament which indicates that since then God hadn't spoken, right? Been a long time since God had said anything.

But when He did speak long ago it was to their ancestors, the Jews. It was through the prophets, those who were called to be His spokesmen. And it was in many different books which were the product of revelation that came through many different means. Some of it was history. Some of it was poetry. Some of it is narrative prose. Some of it is law. Some of it is prophecy. But God's revelation came in many segments, many books, many manners.

And Old Testament revelation was progressive. It didn't go from error to truth. There's nothing there that's error, it's all inspired by God, it's all truly what God wanted said just the way He wanted it said. And God has preserved it so that our English version today is an apt translation of the original autographs.

But the Old Testament moved in a progressive fashion from incompleteness to toward completeness. It didn't go from error to truth, it just is progressive. It was moving toward completeness. It was revelation from a lesser degree to a fuller degree...a progressive revelation. It's important to understand that. It's like teaching children, starts out with the ABC's and simple things and the letters, and then you learn how to spell and after you learn how to spell you learn how to read. God started out as Paul calls the Old Testament, the early parts of the Old Testament, the elementary

principles. There is the spelling book of types and ceremonies and prophecies. And then progressively the theologies begin to develop and a more complete understanding of the revelation of God came. And God used His prophets to write down His Word.

And the New Testament writers recognized that. When Paul says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," he's talking about the Old Testament. When Peter says, "No Scripture comes by private interpretation but holy men were moved by the Spirit of God," he's talking about the Old Testament. When Paul refers to the Scripture, or when Jesus refers to the Scripture, He's referring to the Old Testament. The New Testament affirms the divine character of the Old Testament. That is the preparation for Christ because who is the theme of the Old Testament? Jesus Christ, search the Scriptures for they will speak of Me...Jesus said. On the road to Emmaus, you remember, after His resurrection He met with the disciples and it says He opened up the Old Testament, He started at the law and the prophets and the holy writings and He revealed Himself, didn't He? He's the theme of it all. Whether you start out in Genesis 3:15 with the seed of the woman, or whether you come to the end of the Old Testament, to Malachi and the great judge who will come in judgment against the ungodly, Christ is the subject all the way through. He's the one pictured in the ceremonies, He's the one pictured in the sacrifices. He is the great King that's always being promised. He's the great prophet that is to come, the anointed one, the Son who will reign over the nations of the world. as Psalm 2 indicates. He's the theme of it all.

And so, all of that was preparation. That's why, as I pointed out, was so important, that's why Zacharias, the father of John, the husband of Elizabeth, when Zacharias realized the Messiah was going to be born, he understood that from an Old Testament perspective. The whole Old Testament just exploded with significance to him. Now he could see, as we see at the end of the first chapter of Luke, he could see the One who was coming to fulfill the Davidic Covenant, the One who is coming to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant, the One who was coming to fulfill the Mosaic Covenant...well...the New Covenant, not the Mosaic, the New Covenant. All of that is all Old Testament preparation.

If I had the time I could take you through all 39 books of the Old Testament and point to something in those books that looks at Christ. He is the suffering servant in the book of Isaiah, the One who is to come to die in our place. The sheep who would be led to slaughter for us. He's everywhere in the Old Testament. And that was all preparation.

But frankly, it was incomplete. It was fragmentary, it was bits and pieces here and there. Nobody got all of it. Each writer got a little piece of it. And another writer a little piece of it, and another writer a little piece of it. And all that was stretched out over 1500 years and they didn't know each other in many cases. They all had bits and pieces. And Peter says they looked at what they wrote and wondered exactly who they were writing about and what time this was going to happen. They couldn't sort it all out. So as true as it was, it was incomplete. It was progressive revelation but it hadn't progressed to fullness until you come to the second point I want you to see.

The preparation for Christ is verse 1, that's the Old Testament. The presentation of Christ comes in verse 2. "God spoke in the Old Testament," verse 1, "but He also spoke in these last days, He's spoken to us in His Son." Now that's...that's when the revelation was completed.

You say, "What do you mean by that?" I mean, that that's all God had to say. He was done. When He sent His Son, nothing more needed to be said.

You say, "Well why doesn't the New Testament end at the gospels?" Because though the gospels give us the story of Jesus Christ, give us the historical story and there's no wonder there's four gospels because His life is so monumental it needs to be looked at at least four different ways. But it doesn't the story really ends there, it ends with Jesus going back into heaven at the end of the gospels and announcing that He's going to come and set up His Kingdom in the future, He'll be returning. That really is the end of God's revelation of Himself, it's complete in Jesus Christ. The rest of the New Testament doesn't add bits and pieces and fragments, etc., etc. It just looks back at Christ and focuses on interpreting the significance and meaning of His incarnation, His righteous life, His substitutionary death, His literal, bodily, physical resurrection...the implications of all of that on the world and on the church until He comes again and ends, of course, in Revelation describing His return.

You don't go pass the gospels through the rest of the New Testament because somehow Christ was an incomplete revelation, He was the final, complete revelation of God about which the rest of the New Testament does explanation under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit...so that what I'm saying to you here is perfect illustration of that. Hebrews 1 doesn't question whether Christ is the full revelation of God, it affirms that and goes on to explain that. So no prophet in the Old Testament grasped the whole picture. They each got sort of a fragment.

But when Jesus came, He was the whole picture. In these last days He's spoken to us in His Son. In Him God did not display some of the truth, He displayed all of it. He revealed God fully by being God fully. That's why Colossians is so important, chapter 2, it says, "In Him dwells all the fullness of the godhead bodily." No longer was God speaking in diverse manners. No longer was He speaking in fragments progressively. This is His last word and His full and final revelation because when Jesus came all there is of God to know was known because He was God.

The little phrase "in these last days" is a familiar phrase to Jews. They would identify it as the Messianic age, like the latter days, always refers to the Messianic age. So in the time of Messiah God spoke. He spoke in His Son who was God incarnate. To Noah God revealed the quarter of the world population to which Messiah would belong. To Abraham God revealed the nation of Messiah. To Jacob God revealed the tribe of Messiah. To David and Isaiah God revealed the family of Messiah. To Micah the town, to Daniel the time, to Malachi the forerunner, to Jonah God gave a

graphic illustration of the resurrection of Messiah. But each knew only a part, but when Christ came He was the whole.

In Him the revelation of God is absolutely complete, full...not in shifting hues and fading colors, not in separated ways, but He Himself is God full of grace and truth, uniting in His one person the whole spectrum of divine revelation. You can see in Him everything you need to know about God. You can see in Him the wisdom of God, the intelligence of God, the omniscience of God for He knew things that were in the heart of man when it was never spoken. You can see in Him the power of God as He does wondrous miracles. You can see in Him the creator ability of God as He creates life out of death, as He creates hearing out of deafness, sight out of blindness, as He creates food to feed a multitude. You can see in Him the compassion of God as He weeps at a funeral. You can see in Him the justice of God as He makes a whip and cleanses the temple. You can see in Him all there is to see of God because He is God.

And so the partial, fragmentary, polumeros, polutropos revelation was incomplete until He came. And, of course, that establishes that Jesus is superior to the prophets. They were fragmentary, He was the whole picture. He's not just another prophet. He is God. The Old was fragmentary and incomplete. The New is perfect and final. The Old was passed on by prophets who were sinful men. The New is revealed in His Son who was sinless. And God has now fully expressed Himself. Jesus could even say this, "If you've seen Me you've...what?...seen the Father."

I don't understand how this works. I don't understand how that baby lying in that manger can be fully man and fully God. I don't understand the mystery of godliness. But I know that's what the Bible says. There was preparation for Christ laid out in the Old Testament so that when He came there would be prophecies fulfilled and it could be known that this was in fact the Messiah because He would fit those perfectly. But it was an incomplete revelation till Jesus came and then the revelation was complete. Everything that needed to be said about God is said in Christ. You can see He's God and hates sin because Jesus had to die for it, that's how much He hates it. You can also see that He's a God that forgives sin because He placed Jesus as the substitute for unworthy sinners like us. What you want to know about God you see in Jesus.

Now that's why I've said through the years, and I think it's genuinely true, if you love someone who is not a Christian, you know someone and you want to work with them to bring them to embrace Christian faith, the issue is Jesus Christ. And if someone can honestly study the life of Jesus Christ and conclude that He is not God, He is not the revelation of God, He is not the Christ, He is not the savior of the world, then the God of this world has severely blinded the minds of such a person to the truth because that truth is abundantly evident. Even the end of the gospel of John, "These things are written that you might know that Jesus is the Christ, that you might believe." The New Testament makes that case.

So from the preparation to the presentation of God in His Son to the preeminence of Christ, just a couple of thoughts here and we'll save the rest for next time. There's a seven-fold presentation here of the preeminence of Christ, seven-fold. He's the heir of all things, He made the world, He's the radiance of God's glory, He's the exact representation of His nature, He upholds all things by the word of His power, He is the One who made purification of sins and sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high...that's the summation of who this was that came into the world. When you confess that Jesus is Lord, this is what you're saying, you're saying that Jesus is the heir of all things, that is to say He's the end of everything, He is the one who made the world, that is to say He's the beginning of all things. He is the radiance of the glory of God. He is the exact representation of God's nature. He upholds all things by the word of His power. He is the one who made purification for sins and He is the one now seated at the right hand of the majesty on high...that's who Jesus Christ is. That's the confession...Jesus as Lord. He's the end of all things. He's the heir. He's the beginning of all things, He made everything. He's the center of all things, He holds all things by the word of His power. This is the great representation of His preeminence.

First look at verse 2, we'll just look at that verse, there's two of them there. First, His inheritance indicates who He is. He is appointed heir of all things. Now that is an unqualified statement. It's very difficult to embellish. What it means is, He's going to inherit everything, absolutely everything. Jewish people understood the laws of inheritance. They understood the firstborn child received the inheritance, the family estate, the family wealth was passed down to the firstborn son. They would understand that. On the Messiah being the firstborn Son, as it were, born of God is the heir of God. He will receive all. Inheritance follows sonship. He is the Son and therefore He is the heir of all that God has. In fact, in Psalm 2 God speaks to the Son and says, "I'll give You the nations of the world as an inheritance." All in the created world, whether the material world or the spiritual world, all that exists in the created order, all that God has ever created, material and spiritual, belongs to Christ.

Amazing to think about it, a Galilean carpenter crucified as a criminal on a cross outside Jerusalem is actually the heir to the universe. In fact, in Philippians 2:10 it says, "Some day every knee is going to bow," every knee everywhere in the universe is going to bow to Him because He's going to be sovereign over all of it. Admittedly when He was in this world He had nothing, little or nothing. What He did have was on His back. They took that away from Him by gambling for it, nailed Him on a cross naked. He was even buried in a grave borrowed. But some day all angels, all human beings, all powers in the universe, all that exists in the material world and the spiritual world will belong to Him and everyone will bow the knee to the Son of God.

Pretty amazing to think about that Romans 8:16 and 17 says that we're going to be joint heirs with Him, isn't it? I guess in that sense it's like a marriage, we're the bride and He's the bridegroom. He's going to take us as His bride and we're going to share His inheritance. This is not just another man. This could not be said of any prophet. This could not be said of any angel. He is the heir of

everything. He will have the authority, the power and the rule over all that exists, every soul that has ever lived. He will come some day in His return as King of kings and Lord of lords to exercise that sovereign rule over His inheritance and to take the universe. First of all, He'll cleanse it, preparing it for His Millennial Kingdom and He'll uncreate it, destroy it, create a new heaven and a new earth in which He will be the sovereign over all that exists throughout eternity. This is who He is. This is the heart and soul of the Christian faith. When you're saying "Jesus is Lord," you are saying He is the heir to the universe.

Secondly, He is identified not only by His inheritance but by His power. Verse 2 says, "Through whom He also made the world." John 1:3 says that Jesus was the one who created the world, by Him were all things made, nothing was made without Him, John 1:3 says. Through Him, dia, the agency by which God created through the Son again indicates that He is God, He is the very God who created the universe. Everything is made by Him and for Him. Colossians 1:16, all things made by Him become His possession. He is the one who made the world, the kosmos the order, the created order and not just the earth, but the created order. He is the one who made all that has ever been made. Hebrews 11:3 talks about the worlds were prepared by the Word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible...and that's talking about ex nihilo, creation of everything out of nothing. He made the whole thing. He is the creator. So He is the beginning as well as the end. He created time, He created space, He created force, He created action, He created matter. He created the spiritual, the material. And we've been studying the origins in Genesis and looking at some of the folly of those who believe in evolution. Sir John Eckels(?), Nobel laureate in neurophysiology said in Chicago back in January of 1968 that the odds were against the right combination of circumstance occurring to evolve intelligent life on earth. So he was asked..."Well, what are the odds?" And I don't know how he came up with this but he said, "As far as he could tell, the odds of life spontaneously occurring on earth and being intelligent is four-hundred-thousand-trillion-trillion-trillion-trillion to one." Or you could quadruple that if you want, or you could just say it's impossible if you want to be truthful.

Sir John Eckels went on to say it was fantastically improbable and indicated that he believed that that's how it happened anyway. Somehow man is believed to have evolved out of some primeval slime into a creature who is, for example, heart beats 800 million times in a normal life and pumps enough blood to fill a string of tank cars from New York to Boston, a tiny half-inch of brain cells contains all the memories of a life time. This by chance? The ear transferring airwaves to fluid without loss...and so it goes.

A sun...we think the sun is so big, you could pour 1.2 million earths into it if you could make a hole in it, put a million 2 earths into the sun and still have room for 4.3 million moons. You think that's big? Here's one for you. There's a star called Betelgeuse, if you haven't seen it, it's probably because it's 880 quad-drillion miles away. Scientists tell us its diameter is 200 million miles. The diameter of one star is greater than the orbit of the earth. How did that accident happen? We don't need to beg this

issue...we've gone over it. He's the one who made everything. Boy, the mystery of godliness lying in that manger in that little infant life was the one who was the heir of all things and He was a worthy heir because in fact He made everything.

Well, we'll look at verse 3 next time.

Father, we are basically dwarfed into infinitesimal smallness by these kinds of thoughts. They just stagger us. We cannot comprehend, cannot certainly explain the mystery of godliness that God was manifested in the flesh. We believe it. We believe it. A lot of people in the world don't, we do because we believe Your Word is true. We're amazed that people can reject Christ so vociferously, so vocally, so adamantly and so ignorantly. Father, I pray that if there's anyone here who is rejecting Jesus Christ they would be honest enough to open the pages of the New Testament and read the story and read the record and read the testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, read the testimony of the early church in the book of Acts, read the testimony of the writers of the epistles who affirm who Jesus Christ is with all the evidence from the things He said, the things He did and the way in which He fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies perfectly, completely. We look at Christ and we see you, God manifest in the flesh, the full and final revelation, the fullness of the godhead dwelling in a body and we know the revelation is complete. We thank You that for most of us You and Your grace have brought us to the knowledge of Christ and we rejoice in that. And we confess Jesus as Lord, and by that we mean that He is the heir of all things, the one for whom everything ultimately is made. He is also the creator of all things, the one who made it in the beginning. We acknowledge this is our Lord Jesus Christ whom we love and serve and upon whom we depend on our salvation, our eternal life...in whose name we pray. Amen.

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