

Jesus : Son of God

Hebrews 1:1-8, 2:5-12

Rev Dr Jos Strengholt

Today the New Testament reading was from the letter to the Hebrews. I like us to focus on those words this morning – about Jesus who radiates the glory of God, who is crowned with glory, and who brings us to glory.

1. Jesus radiates Gods glory

Throughout the Old Testament, God communicated to Israel and the world through spokespeople like Jonah, Moses, through his laws; He spoke through images like his tabernacle, and the sacrifices. He spoke through David who wrote the Psalms.

God has spoken. That concept is core to our faith. Had he remained silent, he would still be shrouded in thick darkness and we would live in total ignorance. But He spoke! He took the initiative in making himself known.

Initially, God spoke through prophets; human beings like us, who received a message from God. Those messages were good; but they could only communicate who God was to a limited extent; and they did not make the hearers of those messages better people.

Beside that, we all know how verbal communication, an email, a letter, something you write on facebook, can be so easily misunderstood.

And there was so much more to be said than what mere prophets could express! And mankind needed so much more that words –we were in needed of salvation! How could God fully express his heart, his mind, his will? How could He offer his salvation? He had to send his Son!

The communication of God through his some went so much further than what He could say through all those fine prophets before Jesus had come.

And anyone who claims that after Jesus Christ had come, more revelations are needed, is completely misguided. We do not need more prophets, we already have the Son of God himself.

FF Bruce, in his *Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT, 1964, p. 3, says it well: “The story of divine revelation is a story of progression up to Christ, but there is no progression beyond Him.”

In Jesus Christ, God found a perfect means to express himself. He translated Deity into humanity. John in his gospel says: ‘The Word was made flesh.’ God became knowable in the best possible way.

Gods revelation through the Son is incomparable to any earlier revelation; the writer of this

letter to the Hebrews explains this. He is not a normal prophet, a mere human being, ‘He is the heir of all things’, Hebrews exclaims. He will, in the end of this world, own all things. That cannot even be said of the angels!

He is also the one who stood at the beginning of all things – God created the world through his Son.

This whole expanding magnificent universe was made by him, with all the galaxies, with this small planet earth, with all its beauty. And you were made by him as well – you were created by the one who came to this world as a little baby, Jesus Christ.

John, the writer of the fourth Gospel, opens his Gospel by saying: ‘All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made.’

So the Son stands before the universe, and he inherits the universe in the end.

And in Heb 1:3 we also read that he presently also upholds the universe. He holds all things in his hands and ensures our existence. He does this through his Word... He speaks, and it happens. This is Jesus, our Lord.

With the Father, He embraces all existence. If He would withdraw his presence and work from our present universe, it would immediately collapse, explode, stop existing. He holds it together from moment to moment.

This is not only true for our whole magnificent universe – but also for you, and your own life.

He is the one who guarantees your life. He created you, he upholds you, he carries you to the end. How safe that is! How comfortable that is! We must be so worshipful and thankful.

This Son of God is called the radiance of the glory of God in Hebrews 1:3. The word used for radiance (*bahaa*) is only used here in the New Testament. It can mean reflection but much better is: radiance.

Jesus is not like the moon, reflecting the light of the Sun, but He himself is the Sun. He says of himself: ‘I am the light.’ This became very visible during the life of our Lord on earth, and especially when he did miracles like giving blind people the light in their eyes. And even more clearly, when Jesus was transfigured on the mountain, as witnessed by some of his disciples. They saw his brilliant radiance.

In the Old Testament, there was fire and light above the tabernacle and the temple; it was the presence of God himself; Israel called that the glory of God; his magnificent presence among his people. Jesus is that glory, is what we are being told.

We cannot see the sun without its radiance; we cannot see God - who is hidden for us - without the radiance of his Son. In our Nicene Creed, we therefore call him 'light from light, true God from true God.'

Jesus is also called the imprint of the nature, or the essence of God. Look at Jesus, and you see God.

The Greek word used in Hebrews 1:3 for 'exact imprint' is *character* (suurah). The word is only used here in New Testament. It means the seal of a person, his stamp, the perfect representation. He is the perfect copy of the hypostasis - the nature, the essence of God.

Jesus radiates the glory of God. He is the glory of God. He is God himself. This is what the writer presents here to us; and he then he continues to underline it with some quotes from the Old Testament.

- He shows how even in the Old Testament, God the Father spoke to his Son. Hebrews 1:5
- He shows how the Angels were told by God to worship the Son. Hebrews 1:6
- He shows that the Son is called God in the Old Testament, and that God, the Son, has an everlasting throne. (Hebrews 1:8)

He is the Son of God; angels worship him - even the chief of angels, St Michael, bows down in worship; that you do only for God himself. Jesus Christ is God who rules eternally. After him, there is no other, new revelation from God. No more prophets to explain us about God. We communicate with God himself, because we have the Son in our midst!

This is not just a nice theological thought... it also impresses upon us the importance of the message we hear. If the message of the prophets, or of angels, was so full of impact, how much more the message of the Son of God. Hebrews 2:3 says therefore, "How shall we escape if we neglect such great salvation!"

2. Jesus is already crowned with glory

In the next chapter of the letter to the Hebrews, the writer shifts the focus to God's plans with mankind. God will subject the world to come - not to angels, but to men and women! That is the plan of God. For a little while we have been

made lower than angels, but God desires to crown us with glory and honour.

Well, that was the plan... but because of sin, all things went badly wrong. Read Hebrews 2:8c: "At present we do not yet see everything in subjection to mankind." With our brilliant minds we can subdue the earth to a certain extent, and we have certainly learned how to damage, yes even how to destroy life on earth. To such an extent, that it is questionable whether we can now speak of us subduing the earth. We are not even able to subdue our own impulses.

We have so badly messed up! Do you have a feeling that all things are subjected to you? That you are crowned with glory and honour? It feels more as if we are tossed around on the waves of existence... not much glory and honour...

But... read Hebrews 2:9. What we do see is that Jesus is already crowned with glory and honour. He became - like us - a little lower than the angels for a while. The one who came to save us from our sins, the Son of God himself, the one worshiped by the angels, had to become a human being like us.

Because we are of flesh and blood, God became flesh and blood. Jesus so much identified with us in our humble state; he even calls us his brothers and sisters.

But as he underwent this suffering and humiliation for the sake of mankind and in obedience to God, God made him rise from the dead, and Jesus ascended into heaven. Now he is seated at the right hand of the Father, on the one throne with the Father. Where he was before he became a human being. He is there, already crowned with glory and honour, radiating the glory of God... He has received all the glory and honour that God originally intended all mankind to enjoy.

3. Jesus brings many sons to glory

God's goal has never changed. He wants to crown us with the same glory and honour. That is why our Lord became a man. He so united with us, so embraced us, that when he returned to the Father and was crowned with the glory and honour he had before creation and before he became a man, he was also able to bring us along with him to the Father. To enjoy the same glory and honour.

Read Hebrews 2:10.

This was the plan of God... He created mankind in order to have them share in his own glory. To make them enjoy his presence. God desires to lift us up into his presence and he did so through his Son Jesus Christ.

Jesus was made perfect through his suffering, and thereby he could bring us into the glory of God. Does this mean he was not perfect before his suffering? Morally he was always perfect, that is not the issue here. But by his suffering – culminating in his death, he became the perfect Saviour for us.

He became the trailblazer – the perfect guide. He went in front of us as the glorious Lord, to bring us along with him into the glory of the Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit.

Not prophets, or angels, were able to restore mankind to community with God; only true God of true God could do this. And he not only offers forgiveness, and restoration, but even participation in the glorious communion with God.

And this makes us worshipful. The proper response to learning about our one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is not philosophizing, it is not theology. It is prayer, worship, and obedience.

Read Hebrews 2:1-4.

Let us not neglect the great salvation that Christ, the Son of God, offers to us.

We have such a great God who in himself, by himself, through himself, decided to save our miserable lives and to lift us up to his glorious heights.

Today we experience this in a fractured manner, sometimes, on a very minimal scale; one day, when this world and our lives are fully renewed, we will be with Him as he is. In glory – that is, in the presence of God. And today we are invited to anticipate this glorious communion with God at his table, where he offers us bread and wine.

Amen.