

The Glory of Christ (2)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 June 2025

Preacher: Colin Dow

[0 : 0 0] Amen. The glory of Christ in the divine constitution of his person, the most noble, useful, beneficial object with which we can fill our minds and hearts.

The Puritan John Owen wrote these words nearly 400 years ago to encourage Christians in his day to fix their minds on who Jesus is. Many people think that Jesus was just a good man, but the Bible teaches that he was far more. He was not just a good man, he was the God-man.

Jesus Christ, our Lord, at the same time was both human and God in one person. We don't know how this is possible. It's a mystery we'll never understand. Theologians call it the hypostatic union, Jesus Christ, both divine and human, in one person.

Whenever you see a Greek Orthodox icon of one of their saints, you'll often see them holding up their right hand. Their thumb and first two fingers are held upright like this, signifying that there are three persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The other two fingers are clenched in their palm, signifying the two natures of Christ, human and divine. It's a mystery we do not know and shall never fully understand, but it's clearly taught in the Bible.

The same Jesus who died in agony on the cross was both human and God. John Owen writes here, of this truth, must the whole church fall down in worship, humbly adoring what they cannot comprehend.

[2 : 3 0] In this does the second great foundation of the glory of Christ consist. The first is his glory as the revealer of God. The second is his mysterious person. How he at the same time is both God and man, both divine and human. Now we know that the book of Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians who were in danger of leaving behind them their Christian faith and returning to Judaism. Its author wants them to understand the supremacy of Christ compared to all the symbols and shadows of Judaism. Hebrews couldn't start on a higher note. From the densely packed chapter 1 verses 1 through 4, Jesus is held up in the glory of his mysterious person as both divine and human. And from these verses, I want us to consider three things this evening. First, who is Christ? Second, what has Christ done? And third, where is Christ? Who is Christ? What has he done? And where is he? The aim of this sermon, as with all the series, is that with John Owen, we fall down and worship, humbly adoring what we cannot comprehend.

Our aim is that with all the Lord. Our aim is that worship, humbly adoring what we cannot comprehend. of our daily lives to King Jesus. First of all then, who is Christ? Who is Christ? According to the writer of Hebrews, the Christ we worship under door is described in three ways in these verses. First, first, his, that is, God's son. Second, the radiance of the glory of God. And third, the exact nature, the exact imprint of the nature of God. Now, no one and nothing is described in the Bible in such terms.

Certainly not Moses and David, to whose religion the Jewish Christians were being tempted to return. Jesus, in verse 2, is described, first of all, as being God's son. He's not just a son of God.

Not is he called the son of God. He's described as being his son. His son. Formerly God revealed himself in many ways and through many different people, but now he has revealed himself through his son.

There could be no closer relationship between two individuals than that of father-son. They share the same genetics and the same nature. Now, of course, God is spirit, so he doesn't have genetics, but given that Jesus Christ is his son, he shares the nature of his father.

[5 : 49] Although I love my dog, I'm not Lucy's father. I'm Lucy's owner. We're a different species. I'm a human.

She's a dog. When we talk of Jesus as the son of God, his son, with all reverence, we're to think of them as being of the same species. In the Gospels, Jesus often refers to himself as the son of God, which in the Israel of the day was a title for the Messiah, but it doesn't have the same overtones as this announcement here in Hebrews 1 verse 2. To talk of Jesus as his son is to position him as possessing the same nature as his father, as God. Now, the Bible clearly and unmistakably teaches that there is only one God. But here in Hebrews chapter 1 verse 2, we learn that his son is of the same nature as God. There is never more than one God, but God's son is God just as surely as God is God.

Second, Jesus is described in verse 3 as being the radiance of the glory of God. The radiance of the glory of God. I'm going to have to take my word for it because we don't have time to go into it, but there's a word play in the New Testament where the glory of God and the image of God are interchangeable. To say that Christ is the image of God and to say that Christ is the glory of God is to say the same thing. The weight and impressiveness of God is expressed in his image in Jesus Christ. When we talk of him being the radiance of the glory of God, we're talking about how he is the outshining and the brightness of God. The word was used in the world of the date to describe the rays of the sun. They are the outshining and brightness of the sun.

Jesus Christ is the sun rays of God. Back in Isaiah 6 where the prophets saw the Lord, the Lord he saw was Christ. He saw millions of angels flying in before Christ's heavenly throne. They all had six wings and with two they covered their eyes because they could not look directly at the radiance of the the glory of God in Jesus Christ. Now we know that the rays of the sun are of the same essence and nature as the sun itself. The radiance of the glory of God is of the same essence and nature as God himself.

So we're back to where we were before. There is only one God. But the sun is the radiance of the image and glory of God which means he is the same as God. There will never be more than one God. But Christ is God just as surely as God is God. In the last instance again in verse 3, Jesus is described as being the exact imprint of his nature. The exact imprint of his nature. If we have coins in our pockets, the coin bears the exact imprint of King Charles. In the original language, the word there is literally character. Jesus is the exact imprint of God. The engraving of God. The inscription of God. To see him is to see God. To hear him is to hear God. He is the exact imprint of the nature, the essence, the being, or as the Latin translation renders it, the substantia, the substance of God. He is not of a similar substance to God. He is of the exact substance to God. This is why the Nicene Creed insists that Jesus Christ is God of God. Very God.

[10 : 18] Who is the Christ we see weeping at the graveside of his friend Lazarus? Who is the Christ we see being mercilessly punched by the Roman soldiers and having a crown of thorns driven into his head? Who is the Christ of whom we read he has deep compassion upon the leper and the outcast? This Christ is God. Now our human minds cannot understand how Jesus can be both human and God. Even the angels don't understand how this is possible. We do not and cannot understand how the indescribable heavenliness of God and the unspeakable earthliness of humanity are combined without confusion in the person of Christ. We can say certain things about it from the Bible, but at best we're seeing things in order not to be silent. We are not able to understand how it's possible for the Lord Jesus Christ to be both God and man at the same time. So, with the rest of the church, we fall down in worship, humbly adoring what we cannot comprehend.

And yet we want to apply this mysterious teaching about the glory of who Jesus Christ is. We want to remember this evening not to treat Jesus as a plaything, but in the light of who He is as both divine and human, to take Him very seriously indeed.

You know, we may laugh with each other, we may fool around with each other, but we do not laugh at Him or fool around with Him. Jesus is to be afforded and worshiped with the same reverence and awe as we offer to God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, which is why we sing, glory be to the Son, glory be to Jesus, who is Christ.

Second, what has Christ done? What has He done? Even in these few verses, you'll see that the writer has established the superiority of the nature of Christ as God and man over even that of the greatest figures of the Old Testament. But now he reinforces that superiority by referring to the superiority of what Christ has done compared to what Moses did and David did and all the others did.

No other than Christ as God and man could have done these things. He alone has the status and the right to have done them. And the writer mentions at least two.

[13 : 19] The first is Christ and reality. Christ and reality. In verse two, we read that through Christ, His Son, God created the world. Now, literally that word world is the word ages, eons. Through Christ, God created the ages. All that we see, hear, smell, touch, and taste was created by God through Christ. In the very beginning, we read that God spoke the world into existence and God said, let there be light and so on. The speaking of God is a reference to how it was through Christ, His Son, His Son, God created all things. The vastness of the universe with all its stars and its planets and other celestial objects. The magnitude of the oceans and the land with all their diversity of life. The beauty of the dawn and the dusk. The complexity of the human brain. God created it all through His Son. Moses, David, and we included use the things that God created through Christ. But we don't make them. We don't create them. We use them.

Only He can create. He is the creator of the cosmos, the architect of the ages, the originator of the eons. When we hold a rose in our hands and feel its delicate petals, we see its diverse colors and we smell its delightful aroma. For the Christian, it's the creation of our Lord and we praise Him for it.

We experience the world as it is. We look up into the sky at night and we see the handiwork of the Lord. It becomes a spiritual experience for us. Did I say it? We view it in Christological terms.

Why is there something and not nothing? Because of Christ, our creator. But then in verse 3, we read that He upholds the universe by the word of His power.

He upholds the universe by the word of His power. The word used literally means to carry. He carries the universe by the word of His power. From moment to moment, sustaining and upholding it by the mighty word of His power.

[15 : 51] Why do I go to sleep at night and wake up in the morning? Because Christ has carried me and my world through the night. He moves the seasons forward. He causes tides to ebb and flow. He works in and through all the laws of nature to preserve and sustain everything that we experience.

But remember, this is the Christ who was tortured by the Roman soldiers. The Christ who was laid in the tomb. The Christ who rose on the third day. The Christ through whom all things were created and by whom all things are sustained in being. So we're back here to the earlier application. Though we cannot understand how these things can be true, yet we fall down before Christ in humble adoration and worship. We can less afford to ignore Him than to ignore the reality in which we live. For through Him and by Him and for Him it is created and upheld.

Christ in reality. What has He done? The second thing He's done, Christ and redemption. Christ in redemption. In words easily passed over in verse 3, we read, having made purification for sins. After making purification for sins. Greater than His work of creating and upholding was His work of purification. The tense the writer uses reminds us that this is a work he has already completed. It is done. It is finished. The writer's pointing to a definite event in which Christ completed the work of purification is completed. He's pointing to the cross of Christ, the cross on which Jesus died and from which Christ called out. It is finished.

Let's think through these words purification for sins. Sin may not be a word we use in our society, but we can do no better than to define it according to our catechism. Sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God. To sin is to break God's law. To fail to measure up to the standard of God's law. In Psalm 51, King David makes confession to God, against you, you only have I sinned.

How can he say that after all he did? He had committed adultery with Bathsheba. He had lied about it and then had Bathsheba's husband murdered. Yes, he sinned against other people, but ultimately his sin was directed against God, against you, you only have I sinned. Because you see, our sin is always directed against God. Our sinful human natures are by default turned away from God and towards self. Sin is an ugly stain, defacing and ruining our hearts. When the prophet Isaiah was confronted by the holiness of Christ in the Old Testament, he fell to his knees and confessed, woe is me. I'm a man of unclean lips, unclean. Isaiah realized just how dirty, sinful, and ugly he was because of his sin.

[19 : 26] Against you, you only have I sinned, David says, but we read of Christ. He made purification for sins. In every human legal system, the offender pays the price of his sin and guilt. The speeding driver pays the price of his offense by getting points in his license and getting a fine. The fraudster pays the price of his offense by spending time in jail. But in the legal system of heaven, the one offended pays the price of the guilt of the offender. The judge pays the price of the criminal.

The God against whom we have sinned pays the price of our sin. He purifies us from our sin. What do we see on the cross if it is not Jesus Christ, the God-man, paying the price of our sin?

The judge does not let the speeding driver off with a warning. The judge himself pays the fine and gets points in his license. The judge does not dismiss the case against the fraudster, but the judge himself spends time in jail on the fraudster's behalf. This is the amazing and life-changing truth being proclaimed in this verse. I did the crime, but Christ did the time. I deserve to be punished, but Christ was punished in my place. I am the dirty one, he the clean, but on the cross, he became dirty for me. What all the Old Testament sacrifices of bulls and goats could not achieve, Christ, the radiance of the glory of God, did for me.

The creator of all things died on a cross for me, the wood of which he had created. The sustainer of all things was laid in a tomb for me, the stone of which he sustains.

As the hymn says, come behold the wondrous mystery, Christ the Lord upon the tree. In the stead of ruined sinners hangs the Lamb in victory. See the price of our redemption.

[21 : 45] See the Father's plan unfold, bringing many sons to glory. Grace unmeasured, love untold. If who Jesus Christ is in the glory of his mysterious nature, both as God and man, is not enough to bring us to our knees in faith and worship, surely what Christ has done in the glory of his mysterious nature in reality and redemption must be. Surely John Owen is right when he says the glory of Jesus Christ in the divine constitution of his person is the best, the most noble, useful, beneficial object with which we can fill our minds and hearts. Surely see the greatness of our Lord. And though we cannot understand or comprehend everything, we fall down before him in worship. What has Christ. Where is Christ? Where is Christ? Where is Christ? In verse 3 at the end we read,

He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. This is where Jesus is. This is where he's always belonged. For a short while he subjected himself to humiliation, but today he sits on the seat of power in heaven with all authority and power having been given to him. That's where we find him in Isaiah 6. And this is where we find him in Hebrews 1 verse 4, verse 3 rather. This is where we find him in Revelation chapter 5. As our divine Savior and Lord, he no longer hangs on a cross. He is crowned with majesty and glory.

Once again, as they did before, the angels fly before him and call out, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty. But now they have a new song to sing. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. To him who sits on the throne into the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory forever and ever. In the ears of Jesus once rang the voice of a crowd crying out, Crucify Him. But now in his ears rings out the words, Glorify Him.

But for all that, Jesus remains two natures in one person, God and man. God the Father and God the Holy Spirit may not be seen for their entire spirit. We will never see them. But God the Son, the radiance of the glory of God, can be seen, heard, and touched. For though He is seated at the right hand of the majesty on high, He remains flesh and blood. You will see Him. John 1 verse 14, the apostle says, The Word became flesh. The Word, Jesus Christ, became flesh and will never cease to be flesh.

To Him belongs the glory of all the ages under the universe. We will see Him. And we will hear Him. And we will touch Him.

[25 : 26] Now as we close, although I could apply this teaching in a thousand different directions, I want to confine myself to just two. In the first instance, because Jesus is seated in majesty and power, we can take great comfort. One of the reasons that I so admire Prince William and Kate, his wife, is that though they are royalty, they are clearly able to identify with common people and the issues we face. On the throne of heaven today sits one who is flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone and mind of our mind. He not only identifies with us in our human need, He sympathizes with us.

So we ask the question, what does God know, understand, or care about how terrible I feel tonight? Because of who Christ is and what Christ has done, the answer is everything.

He has experienced loneliness and betrayal, stress and pressure, hunger and thirst, suffering and pain.

He knows how we feel. We're not alone in this adventure we call life, for Christ our divine Lord is with us in it all.

Therefore, we can tell Him everything. Absolutely everything. And not only can He sympathize with us, but because He is seated on the right hand of the majesty on high, He can do something about it.

[27 : 15] When my father was dying of prostate cancer, he used to say to me and my brothers, you don't know what it's like.

You don't know what it's like. Well, we didn't. But Jesus did. When no one else knows what it's like for you, Jesus does.

And there's great comfort for us here, is there not? But then, finally, we cannot and dare not ignore Jesus Christ.

We cannot and dare not ignore Jesus Christ. In Hebrews 2 verse 3, the writer asks the question, how can we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

Indeed. How can we escape the judgment of God if we reject and ignore all that Jesus Christ has done? But we also want to ask the question, how could we escape if we neglect such a great Savior?

[28 : 28] Are we neglecting Him who sits on the right hand of the majesty on high? He deserves our faith and our hearts, our worship and our praise.

Our faith. Will today, even though you do not understand everything, particularly how God, how Jesus can be God and man in just one person, will you put your faith and trust in Him as your Savior, as your Lord, as your King?

Thank you.