

# Images Of The Son

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[ 0 : 00 ] Look then, if you will, at the passage from Hebrews, and I'd like just to tell you that what we've been doing and are continuing to do this week and next week to complete this series is go through all those descriptions of the person of Jesus Christ.

The one that we're on today is in verse 3 of Hebrews 1, and it says that he upholds the universe by his word of power, and that's in the series, which begins with the fact that he was appointed the heir of all things, so that at the end of time, Jesus is the one who inherits everything.

Then it goes and says, in the beginning, he was the one, the agent, by whom God created the world.

He is the one who in history, by his life and teaching, his death and resurrection, gave us a glimpse of the glory of God.

And you keep looking at the text, that he bears the very stamp of his nature, that the character of God is revealed in Jesus Christ.

[ 1 : 30 ] And then this statement today, upholding the universe by his word of power. power. And this is that if you take the whole concept of the whole of the cosmos, the whole created order, is held by the word of his power.

Now, I mean, that's one of the hard things about the New Testament, because it was written in a non-scientific, non-technological age.

And that is a stupendous claim, which blows our minds. Because of what it says, that he upholds it. If I could give you, now this may ridicule it for you, but do you know that if you have a really well-trained dog, and you say to him, stay.

And he sits and he waits. And it doesn't matter where you go or what you do, he's there till you come back and change the order. This is the kind of thing that is meant in this statement, that he upholds the world.

[ 2 : 53 ] He upholds the universe by his word of power in a sense that he has made a declaration, and that declaration has perfectly affected the order of the universe and holds it in tension millennia by millennia.

That's what Jesus does. Now, that requires a kind of mixture of things because we think of the universe mostly in terms of the dynamics of astrophysics and those kinds of things and gravitational pull and theories of relativity.

And we've done a tremendous amount so that we understand the kind of balance that exists in the universe. But what this says is that he upholds it by the word of his power.

Now, the thing that I think I want you to try and get hold of as you contemplate that fairly brief statement, upholding the universe by his word of power, is that they were talking about a man who still belong to the living memory of people to whom this was written.

They were talking about Jesus of Nazareth. They weren't talking about the great discovery of some astrophysical phenomena.

[ 4 : 33 ] They were talking about a man who had been born of the Virgin Mary, lived in Nazareth, taught, was tried, crucified, and buried in Jerusalem.

And he rose again. And this, you see, within one generation is how they have come to understand him. That he is the one by whose words, by whose command, the whole cosmic order hangs together.

Now, as members of a secular, materialist, scientific community, I don't expect you to believe that. I would, however, say to you this, that the whole function of the New Testament is to confront you with the person of Jesus Christ in his life, in his death, in his resurrection, in his teaching, in the witness that was born to him by the people whom he encountered.

I expect you to encounter Jesus Christ as the one who is the fulfillment of the centuries of writing, which are the Old Testament.

[ 5 : 53 ] And so I want you to see that he is one in whom it has been argued and whom I continue to argue.

And I, I mean, I try and perpetuate the argument. He is one in whom and through whom God has spoken to us most directly and most simply.

so that this same word which he has given by which the whole universe stands in obedience, that he is the perfect expression of God to us.

If you want to know who God is, this is who he is. This is how the Christian community has come to understand the person of Jesus Christ. And as you give your mind and your heart to considering the testimony that is born to him in the pages of Scripture, it is still possible that you as an individual will come to the place where you know by faith this person, Jesus Christ.

and when the claim is made, he upholds the universe by his word of power, you say, yes, that's right. That that's the gift of faith in him that you've been given.

[ 7 : 33 ] Now, the reason I tell you that is because I want you to go and consider now one of the stories of the sort of life of Jesus, which we read as the gospel story from Mark 4, which says, talks about the great storm in verse 37, you see, in the passage that you have written in front of you.

A great storm arose, the wind and waves beat into the boat, the boat was already filling, he was in the stern asleep on the cushion, they awoke him and said to him, teacher, do you not care that we perish?

And he rebuked the wind and the sea and said, peace be still, and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. Well, this is a demonstration of the authority of the person of Jesus Christ.

This was, in a sense, an example from his life to give you in his life and in the events of one night of his life the record of something that took place which as the church considered it, I mean, the community of believers that lived in the post-resurrection generation.

As they came to consider it, they came to understand, yes, the reason that that kind of thing would happen, that he would stand in a boat in the midst of the Sea of Galilee and say, peace be still, is because he is the one who upholds the universe by his word of power.

[ 9 : 23 ] God. So that, you see, it comes down to if he is who they claim he is, then he can give such a command and the wind and the sea would obey him.

And that's why if you had a New Testament and turned to Colossians chapter 1, you'd see this amazing claim that is made about this person, Jesus Christ in verses 16 and 17 of chapter 1 where it says he is the image of the invisible God.

This is Jesus of Nazareth, the one who was asleep in the boat in the Sea of Galilee, that he is the image of the invisible God.

He is the firstborn over the whole of creation. 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 and he is before all things and in him all things hold together.

You see, there's that amazing understanding of who this person Jesus is. This is the one whom God has made known.

[ 10 : 57 ] This is the one through whom God has spoken to us. Now, God hasn't told us perhaps all we want to know, but he's told us all we're going to know about him.

So, what happens then is in the middle of history there was a man in the middle of sort of, I suppose, modern European history, there was a man called Galileo, whatever you want to say, and he started studying time.

You know, time was something that couldn't easily be measured before he came along. People didn't even have the concept that it could be measured.

You know, and he started to measure it, and he started to watch what happened in the night sky, and he started to measure what was happening in relationship between the sun and the earth, and he came to three conclusions.

One was that the earth revolved on its axis, and that's what caused day and night. And one was that the earth was a planet, and the Greek word planet means a wanderer, so that it traveled through space, and that this is what caused the seasons on an annual basis.

[ 12 : 27 ] The other was that the sun was fixed in the sky, and the earth traveled around it. And for that he was held into court by the church, because he tried to take these facts and relate them to

scripture.

And the church became very fearful and decided that you can't relate these facts to scripture. This man is a heretic. He has to be dealt with. And so he was sent home under house arrest, and told to say the penitential psalms every week for the rest of his life.

Not a bad sentence to be under really. But, and they thought that that might keep his thinking in orbit, that that would, within the proper orbit that they saw for.

And you see, that's where in a sense scripture and science come up against each other, and the church had a vested interest in scripture, and so when science began to challenge it, then the church said, you know, excommunicated people, burned them, did various things to get them out of the way because they were challenging the due authority of this institution which had proved itself to be the power that was ultimately in control of the whole of the universe, and therefore if anybody suggested that there was something that it didn't fully understand, then that person had to be dealt with.

Now the great thing about us is that we aren't barbarians like that. We know that science has all the answers. We know that it's in control.

[14:16] We know that anybody who disagrees with us is to be taken out and burned or imprisoned, you know, because it now has the authority.

the tragic thing that happened, you see, was that at that sort of point in our history, faith as it was represented by the church and science as it was represented by the new learning, separated.

And now, if you, you know, and now you live in a world where you have to choose between the two. But you see, it says of this person Jesus, the one who is prophesied in Scripture, the one who is the Word of God, the one who is the very image of God, this person Jesus is the one who upholds the physical universe by his Word of Power, you know, that he is totally relevant to both aspects of our life, and that the terrible schizophrenia we have because of the separation between the two is something that has done an enormous amount of damage, you know, in that somehow, you know, people say, I don't go to church on Sunday, I go out and worship God in nature, not knowing that the God of nature is in church, you know, in the Scripture, in the person of Jesus Christ. church, and of course, the same mistake is made by the people in church, you know, that this division has taken place, and that this is how humanity behaves.

You know, the church gets all this power and all this authority and excommunicates anybody who doesn't agree with them, and then science and technology and the industrial base of our society gets all this power and all this authority and excommunicates anybody who doesn't agree with them.

[16:22] And then the business community comes along, and everybody knows that the business community is really in control. And therefore, anybody who doesn't work with them and agree with them and so on, has to be dealt with.

You see, and so that what this word is in Hebrews is somebody for the scientist to consider, that he is the one who upholds the universe by his word of power.

It's something for the church to consider. It's something for the business community to consider. It's something for every person to consider, because we all create, which we call our lives, the area of our influence and our authority and our control.

And most of us have, you know, I mean, the problem that we get into is once we've created that, there is no room within our understanding and within our faith for such a person as Jesus Christ. I mean, it's the, you remember the story of the Inquisition where the Grand Inquisitor and Jesus comes to him during the, you know, while the flames burning the heretics are still smoldering in the city square and Jesus comes and is met by the Grand Inquisitor.

[17:51] And the Grand Inquisitor on behalf of the church says, it's taken us centuries to overcome what you taught. Don't come back. You know. That they've rejected him.

And so our establishment communities reject the person of Jesus Christ in order that they may have a place of authority, a place of control.

And that's what takes place. Well, now, where this, you know, this has all happened and I think that we suffer from a kind of terrible schizophrenia about it.

my friends who are, who teach things like New Testament in modern universities recognize the fact that in the academic community, it would be dangerous for you to say that that body of material

which you have made the focus of your study, which is the text of the New Testament, you will not be able to understand if you make the mistake of believing it.

You know, you would lose your objectivity. You would, you would, you wouldn't be properly able in an unbiased way to understand that.

[ 19 : 21 ] And, and of course, our, our, I mean, the Christian, the, the, the New Testament view as expressed in Hebrews is that unless you recognize that God has spoken in Jesus Christ, the one who upholds the universe by his word of power, you're not going to understand the universe, you know, because what has happened is that we have been brought to a place of faith in Jesus Christ to put our whole trust in him, to trust him with our lives, with our families, with everything.

We have been, we have been invited to put our whole trust in the person of Jesus Christ. And that is a faith act. Most of our friends, I mean, I hope you have friends like this, but, and that you're working on them.

Most of our friends would say, if you give me a reason to believe, then I will put my faith in him too. But what happens in experience is that when you have read the testimony to the person of Jesus Christ, you put your faith in him and then you understand reason.

Because reason will never lead you to the comprehension of what possibly God could mean when he says that in Jesus you see the one by whom the whole of the universe hangs together in that person Jesus Christ.

So you come in childlike faith to Christ and you begin to recognize in him the one through whom God has spoken, the one who reveals the character of God, the one by whom the whole of the created order hangs together.

[ 21 : 16 ] So that when Paul starts preaching to the Corinthians in chapter 2, he says to the community of faith, we have a secret wisdom.

It's not the same as the wisdom of the world in which we live, which has its own kind of wisdom. But he says the fatal mistake of the wisdom of the world, the wisdom that belong to the leaders of this world is that when Christ came, they crucified him.

They didn't recognize who he was. That he was the one who upholds the universe by his word of power. He didn't fit within their structure.

And so they crucified him. The chief priest in Jerusalem recognized that he didn't fit within their structure. And he said it would be a good thing for one man to die for the nation.

It would be good for our nation. Making a strange and wonderful double entendre out of it. Saying, you know, that it would be good for one man to die for the nation.

[ 22 : 34 ] But Paul goes on when he's writing to the Corinthians and says, if they had this secret wisdom, they wouldn't have crucified him. And this secret wisdom belongs to those.

It is revealed to us through the person of Jesus Christ in whom and through whom God has spoken to us. And that's why we are invited to put our faith and trust in him.

Not without a struggle. Not without deep thought. Not without becoming aware that instead of being surrounded by an area over which you have authority or within which you have control, that you in fact live in a world that is profoundly ignorant of the most basic reality of what it means to be a human being even.

Let alone the nature and character of God. And that the only way ahead for us in the order and purposes of God is that if we can come to hear his word as he's spoken it to us in Jesus Christ. Christ, the one by whose declaration the whole universe, the whole created order hangs together.

[ 24 : 05 ] And that's the faith into which we are invited by the New Testament. And that's why, as we review the New Testament, that what it does for us by the operation of God's grace through the work of the Holy Spirit is to bring us to the place where, like the wonderful father of the dying son said, I believe, help my unbelief.

I'm surrounded by so much I don't know and so much I don't understand. But my need is such that life without faith is meaningless.

And faith without Jesus Christ is falling. And that's what we're invited to. And that's what it means when it says that God has spoken to us by that one, by his son, the one who by his declaration holds the whole created order in tension, in dynamic tension.

Let me pray. God, words fail me and my mind certainly fails me in beginning to comprehend the wonder of the confrontation which you make with us in the person of your son, Jesus Christ.

Give to each one of us a restlessness that will not allow us to be satisfied with the areas of our authority, the areas of our knowledge, the areas of our control.

[ 25 : 57 ] But give us the grace to believe something which is beyond our knowledge, beyond our control, beyond our understanding, except that we believe that you are in it and that we can trust you.

We ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.