

Heb 1:2-3 The Supremacy of the Son (part 4)

Today we come to part 4 and the 6th of 7 expressions on the supremacy of Christ. Let me remind us of the first 5: 1) He is the heir of all things; 2) He is the creator; 3) He is the administrator of the world; 4) He is the radiance of the glory of God; 5) He is the exact imprint of his nature; and today: 6) He takes our sin; and next week: 7) He is exalted. I am convinced so far in my preaching, there has not been such a clear picture of the person and work of Christ than what we have in in these first three verses of Hebrews. And these 3 verses lay the foundation of the Book. This is why I have spent so much time here. However, I will pick it up and take larger sections as we continue through the letter. With that in mind, let's begin.

1. The Son is supreme because He takes away sin. Look at v. 3. “**After making purification for sins . . .**” Here, we have a picture of the work of the Son to “take away” or “expiate” our sins on the cross. He is speaking of the great doctrine of the atonement, accomplished by the Son, who is also the Great High Priest. And this is very interesting right at the beginning of the letter as the author writes to the Jews. He does not shrink back, but places the death of Christ right in the middle of his description of the supremacy of the Son; right alongside CREATOR, HEIR of all things; LORD OF PROVIDENCE, who is the RADIANCE OF GOD’S GLORY, and the EXACT IMPRINT OF HIS NATURE!

This work of taking away sins is even greater than his work as creator and administrator because, from one perspective that is who He is, and that is what He does as God. It is one thing to speak the universe into existence. It is another thing altogether to take on flesh, and in the greatest of humiliation die on the cross, all with the purpose of taking away our sins. And, this work brings greater glory to Himself because of what He accomplished in “bringing many sons to glory.” What a great salvation!

With this in mind, I would like to emphasize two truths from this verse about the work of Christ in taking away our sins: 1) There must be a cleansing; and 2) Christ accomplished this work by himself.

i. Cleansing. The root in the Greek is where we get our word “catharize.” It basically means to “cleanse” or to “purify.” Recently, I noticed a pain in my right thigh. And as I get aches and pains all the time, I thought nothing of it. But, it gradually grew worse. Every time I would touch it or sit on it in the wrong way, there would be a good amount of pain. So, one night, I asked Kristen to take a look. She found a splinter that had embedded my leg. And over the next few days we worked to get it out. And then, the pain went away. My body was cleansed from this tiny little splinter. The same goes for any wound that we may allow to get infected because we don’t clean it as we ought. But, upon cleaning, the wound and the pain is taken away.

Well, here we see that Christ has taken away our sins through cleansing. He makes us clean! God is Holy! We are not! We defiled because of sin. By nature, and by choice, we fall short of the glory of God. And we cannot enter into the presence of God unless he makes us clean. Because of sin, Isaiah says that even our works that we consider to be righteous are pictured as a filthy rag (Is. 64:6). I think back to so many examples from the OT. Jacob, as he led his family back to the land of Canaan and set up an altar at Bethel, he said to them: “**Put away the foreign gods that**

are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments” (Gen. 35:2). Throughout the OT when they made an altar to sacrifice, they had to purify the altar first, before giving the sacrifice (Ex. 29:36). And with the Law of Moses, there were added so many commands to clean . . . almost everything. There were clean and unclean animals, for both eating and sacrificing. After the birth of a child, the mother was considered unclean for up to 66 days (Lev. 12:5). When someone contracted the skin disease of leprosy, he/she was considered unclean. There were laws about cleaning houses in which a leprous person lived. (Lev. 13-14). There were laws concerning bodily discharges (Lev. 15). There were laws about cleaning the place of the sacrifice. (Lev. 17). There were laws about how the priests were to wash themselves. (Num. 8) On and on we can go.

Well, one of the great truths of the Book of Hebrews is to show that that old system of cleansing could only purify the flesh; it could not cleanse the soul, it could not take away sins. In the Old Covenant, those ceremonies could not atone for sins. They pictured what was to come in the New Covenant, namely the work of the Son to cleanse his people from their sins. Do you remember Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus in John 3? He said to him, **“Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”** (3:5) Here, he gives the principle of cleansing from sin; for without it, no one will ever see God. Jesus spoke of himself as he looked forward to the cross where He would lay down his life as a perfect sacrifice. And then, after his ascension, He would send the Holy Spirit who would effectually make this happen.

I think of Tit. 3:3-6 (turn with me) which says, **“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior . . .”** Or Eph. 5:25-27: **“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”** Today, the Son of God is supreme because He has made us clean. He has taken away our sins!

ii. By Himself. The 2nd truth I would like to draw from this text is the fact that Jesus did this work of taking away our sins by himself. We do not see these words “by himself” in the ESV. In the KJV we read **“when he had by himself purged our sins . . .”** Even if it is not in found in some translations, this is a very important truth found throughout the Bible. It is important because the author is speaking primarily to the Jews who had such an extensive system of purification found in Mosaic Law (as we’ve seen). And there were SO MANY THINGS they had to do to be obedient in that system. Let’s just consider the high priest and the Day of Atonement.

Once per year, the high priest would enter the holy of holies to atone for his sins and the sins of the people. And EVERYTHIN had to be EXACTLY as commanded by God. First, he had to be a man with no blemish or skin issue. Then, he had to wash himself in the right way. Then, he had to be dressed properly. He had the right under garment, the prescribed robe of the right color

with the right attachments. Every tassel and stitch was perfect. His hair could not hang loose. His head had to be anointed with the exact oil. And then he had to come with the right sacrifices, a bull for the sin offering, a ram for the burnt offering. And, two goats, with one to be sacrificed while the other would be let free into the wilderness after laying his hand on it as a picture of God taking away their sins. And after he had entered the holy of holies and sprinkled the blood of the animals on the mercy seat, he would then take his clothes off and wash again before leaving the tent of meeting (tabernacle). Can you imagine all that went into the Day of Atonement! (See Lev. 16.)

And we aren't considering the daily sacrifices with the Levites in general. And consider all the parts of the tabernacle, the outer part, the holy part, and the holy of holies. Consider the making of the ark and all its specifics or the table, the lampstand, the altar of incense, the bronze basin for washing, etc. ALL THESE commands, all these parts that went into that system, and all the meanings and pictures that EACH of those commands and parts represent. And I am just touching the tip of the iceberg. All of these things went into their cleansing, their purification.

But when we come to the NT and we consider the person of Christ, the SUPREME Son of God, the radiance of the glory of God, the exact imprint of his nature, the image of the invisible God, and we consider that in his taking on flesh and living among us, he did not sin. And then we consider the cross where the Son laid down his life as an atonement for sin. ALL those things I just mentioned of that old system were fulfilled in the Son, the great high priest . . . by HIMSELF He purifies our sins. The author was saying, "*ALL those things were part of the old covenant. And yes they were necessary. But, ALL of them picture the beautiful work of the Son of God in making purification for sins.*"

Let's read some verses together.

Pastor: He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself (Heb. 7:27).

Congregation: For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

Pastor: Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Heb. 9:24-26).

Congregation: So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him (Heb. 9:28).

Pastor: For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit . . . (1 Pet. 3:18).

Today, Christ cleans us by HIMSELF; it is his work, a work that ONLY He can do. And because He is the ONLY ONE who can do it, He is supreme. Let me end with a few applications.

App. Only the Son can make you clean. There is no work of righteousness you can do to clean yourself before God. There is one scene in the Voyage of the Dawn Treader where Eustace is changed into a dragon. And no matter what He does, he cannot change himself or scratch his skin away. And then Aslan comes and changes him back to himself. . . . Today, Christ is the only one who can cleanse you for your sins. There is nothing we can do, but to look to Christ!

App. If the Son has cleaned you (taken away your sins), you can draw near to God with full assurance. Heb. 10:19-23 says: **“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.”**

App. Those who have been cleansed by the son are repentant. 1 John 1:9 says: **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** Though a separate work, repentance is essential to salvation.

App. Life is both “war” and “peace,” and this with God. We fight . . . but we fight as those whose sins have been cleansed. No matter the struggle, no matter the battle, no matter the opponents of our wrestling, WE WIN. Why? Because our sins have been taken away! Christ has cleaned us. He has “purged” our sins. So, no matter what sickness, no matter what emotional stress, no matter what anxiety, no matter what persecution, no matter what hardship, no matter what suffering you endure in this life, KNOW THIS Christian brother or sister, YOUR SINS HAVE BEEN CLEANSED! The best of counselors can only give you a band aid, but the Great Counselor, the Lord of Heaven and Earth heals your soul, and one day, He will heal your body as well! And these things, the angels long to look into! This is the only reason Jesus can say, **“My peace I give you, but not as the world gives . . .”** This is only reason God can actually be the one who comforts us; it flows from a right relationship where there is no enmity, nothing that separates, no sin that keeps us from coming to his great throne of grace. I love the picture from the movie “Anna and the King” as the little girl runs to the Father, who is the king. No hesitation! No amazement that she is coming! No, wait a moment until I finish my discussions with the heads of state! Only love and comfort and the greatest of affection for the little girl! Wow!

Today, Jesus is supreme because He has taken away our sins.