

**Text: Heb 1.3a**

We are working through the descriptive phrases of Jesus in the preamble to Hebrews. So far we've seen:

**Communion: The Perfect Son**

Heb 1.2 - For our communion service, we look at the use of the word "Son" in Hebrews (without the article) as a particular way of highlighting the unique person of our Saviour.

**Communion: Heir of All Things**

Heb 1.2: the first of seven designations for Christ in Heb 1.2-3 is "heir of all things." The work of Christ for sinners earned our Lord the right to inherit all the kingdoms of the world and everything in the universe. We rejoice in his work for us.

**Communion: Creator of All Things**

Hebrews 1.2 - In this communion message, we consider what it means for us to have our Creator as our Saviour and what the amazing grace God offered in redeeming back the Creation that seemed to be lost forever.

Today, our message is:

***Communion: Radiance of God's Glory***

Read Heb 1.1-4

The first thing I want to say about this phrase is this comment from David Allen:

"The first clause of v. 3 describes the Son's relation to the Father, demonstrating his qualifications to function as the mediator of revelation."<sup>1</sup>

What does "mediator" mean? A mediator is someone who stands between two parties, carrying the message of one to the other. That action is called "mediating."

In the prologue to Hebrews, our author says that the Son is the last mediator between God and men. God used prophets, now he speaks through the Son.

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<sup>1</sup> David Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary 35 (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Publ. Group, 2010), 115.

What we are saying is that the Son's unique relation to the Father is what makes him the perfect mediator (spokesman) to man. His message is not simply to tell us more about the Father, but to bring us into communion with the Father when we enter a relationship with the Son, *the radiance of his glory*.

**Proposition:** The Son reveals the light of God to you, so you may believe His Word.

## I. The meaning of radiance

### A. Synonyms for "radiance"

1. "brightness" KJV, YLT
2. "effulgence" ASV
3. "outshining" BBE
4. "resplendence" ETH (from the Syriac)
5. "reflection" GWN
6. "gleaming brightness" NIRV

All these terms have to do with "brightness" and "light" coming from a light source.

### B. The Greek word: ἀπαύγασμα

#### 1. Competing definitions

- a. F. F. Bruce: "He is the 'effulgence' or 'reflection' of God's glory."<sup>2</sup>
- b. Louw-Nida: "shining, either in the sense of radiance from a source or the reflection of a source of light"<sup>3</sup>

If radiance/effulgence, then it is light from a source, as the direct light of day from the Sun.

If reflection, then it is light reflected from a source, as moonlight is the reflected light of the Sun.

<sup>2</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 47.

<sup>3</sup> Johannes E. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 174.

## 2. Most church fathers held that the Son is the direct light from the Father, the radiance

“Both meanings would be possible according to usage and context, yet patristic consensus favours the interpretation that Christ is the effulgence of the divine *doxa*, as sunshine is of the sun or light of light.”<sup>4</sup>

### a. Constable:

“Probably the writer meant that Jesus’ glory was like the glory of the sun rather than like the glory of the sun that is reflected by the moon.”<sup>5</sup>

### b. Allen:

“Jesus is the effulgence of God’s glory because he shares the same divine nature as the Father, yet he is distinct from the Father in his person.”<sup>6</sup>

- 1) Before the incarnation, the Son shares in the divine glory because he is *one* with the Father
- 2) After the incarnation, the Son reveals the divine glory to men because he is “the embodied revelation of God’s essential glory.”<sup>7</sup>
- 3) In revealing God, he reveals himself, since he is God
- 4) And he reveals nothing other than God

### c. The Nicene Creed: “light from light”

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things seen and unseen.

<sup>4</sup> Gerhard Kittel, “Αὐγάζω, Ἀπαύγασμα,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 508.

<sup>5</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Heb 1.1.

<sup>6</sup> Allen, *Hebrews*, 119.

<sup>7</sup> Allen, *Hebrews*, 119.

And in one Lord, Jesus Christ the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only-begotten, that is, of the essence of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of the same being as the Father, through whom all things came to be, both the things in heaven and on earth, who for us humans and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, becoming human, who suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, who is coming to judge the living and the dead.

And in the Holy Spirit.

The catholic and apostolic church condemns those who say concerning the Son of God that “there was a time when he was not” or “he did not exist before he was begotten” or “he came to be from nothing” or who claim that he is of another subsistence or essence, or a creation, or changeable, or alterable.<sup>8</sup>

3. Since the Son is the direct light from the Father, he is:
  - a. Eternal (never a moment when light does not emanate from the father)
  - b. God: only God is eternal

“Each word pulsates with deity.”<sup>9</sup>

## II. The effect of his glory

- A. The light is a lamp to my feet
  1. He is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path
  2. He shows the way to the Father
- B. The light is a spotlight on my darkness
  1. In his light, my sin stands exposed

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<sup>8</sup> “Fourth Century Christianity » Creed of the Council of Nicaea,” accessed October 27, 2022, <https://www.fourthcentury.com/urkunde-24/>.

<sup>9</sup> Allen, *Hebrews*, 116.

2. Yet by his light, my sin can be purged

C. The light is a beacon in the darkness

1. The bright and morning star

2. The light of the world to come (there is no night there)

**Conclusion:**

**Proposition:** The Son reveals the light of God to you, so you may believe His Word.