

Title: Who's Talking?  
Text: Hebrews 1.1-4  
Theme: The supremacy of Christ  
Series: Hebrews #2  
Prop Stmtnt The supremacy of Christ is the basis for his final authority over your life.

Read Text:

If being here is not where you usually are at this time on a Sunday morning, then I am assuming that there is basically one of two reasons why you are. 1) You claim to be a follower of Christ and are looking for a church family, or a new church family to belong to, and somehow you heard about this church or 2) You do not claim to have a clear understanding of Christianity and you are curious. You know that there is something more to life (and to your life), and you are investigating that. And perhaps as part of that, there is a recent situation that God has used to get your attention..

All of you need to know that that the text from the Scriptures that we are looking at this morning is extremely controversial and highly offensive. If we take these verses at face value, then we are acknowledging that there is only one ultimate source of truth. That idea, that there is one source of truth, one absolute system of truth grates upon many people. I know that. I also know that the very manner in which I communicate is offensive. I speak in a manner that reflects the authority of the text. The message is a sermon that is delivered in propositional format. Clear arguments are set forth. Logical corollaries are established and passionate application is made. That is not acceptable in contemporary culture. Is not religious dogma the cause of so much war and suffering? Can we not look at religious history and even contemporary circumstances and see how religion has been used over and over as a “tool in the hands of power-hungry individuals who use it to assert authority and strengthen their own hands”<sup>1</sup> in order to get whatever it is that they want, whether that be sex, or money, or power or influence? We sure can. But to be fair, the same thing can be said about politics, business, education and science. These truths are not delivered with anger, but neither are they given with embarrassment or apology. We are not given the option to read into them whatever we want, nor take whatever we want from them. I am delivering these truths as they were given, that is for your serious consideration and for your embracing. I believe that many of you will come to belief and commitment and therefore, joy in our study of the book of Hebrews.

I am simply acknowledging up front that the Bible properly understood is offensive. It does not say that everyone is on a quest for truth in their own way and that everyone finds God on their own terms and that all religions are equal. The Bible, the Koran, the book of Mormon, the Vedas of Hinduism, and Buddhism's Four Noble Truths are not, as so many Americans believe, different paths on the same spiritual quest. This passage says truth is not a journey that you pursue within yourself. This text is a bold and clear, and unapologetic statement that declares that there is a God who is not defined by us, but is the one by whom we are defined. We do not create him with our thoughts, nor fashion him with our ideas of what kind of a God we would like, but rather God has revealed

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<sup>1</sup> Beyond Opinion, Ravi Zacharias, p.6.

himself to us as he is. He speaks to our lives from outside of life because he is the creator of it and he also speaks to our lives from within it, because entered into his own creation through the Incarnation. As God, his Word is true. As truth his word is absolute. As absolute, it is authoritative. And because it is true, it is also enduring. That means that forever his word is absolute and authoritative. Since he is God, you cannot appeal to one higher than Him. As absolute, his Word is unchanging and as eternal, there will never be a time when this is not the case.

Now, if all that this is about is a debate in which absolute, propositional truth is set forth in a cold, lifeless, calculated, arrogant and argumentative manner, then at the end I would say, "I am right, you are wrong, get over it." That is NOT what I am attempting to accomplish. The reason is because of what this truth is about. There is nothing cold or lifeless about this at all. The propositional truth that I am championing before you this morning is that the Sovereign, Creator God has spoken to us in a final, decisive and compelling way through His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the very delight of God, and the one whom your soul desires. There is no purpose to your life without him. But, the fact that he has spoken authoritatively means that we are obligated to listen and surrender.

That is going to be an enormous challenge for some of you. Some of you are here and you make no claims to faith and this Christianity thing is something that you are investigating and I am thrilled about that. However, some of you think that you are a follower of Christ and you are not. You have listened to your own voice, or listened to the voice of others and it is not the truth of God. And when you are confronted with the clarity of God's Word some of you react and say, "that is not the god that I worship." And that is true because the god that you worship is a fictitious creation, by which you have been lulled into a false security. I have chosen to preach through the book of Hebrews because some of you need to come to faith in Christ and like every book of the Bible, it makes so much of Jesus, whom I pray that you will see with new eyes, love with deep joy, and savor with passionate worship and follow with a long, persevering obedience in the same direction. Let's look at the text and make some observations.

Translations divide these 4 verses into 3 sentences but they are actually one long sentence, full of relative clauses and prepositional phrases. Looking closely, you see that the main subject is God and the main verb is, "has spoken." But, there is a contrast that is set up, even with that main verb. The contrast is between how God spoke in the past and how God has spoken now. This contrast is established by four different comparisons:

Long ago	compared to	in these last days
At many times and in many ways	compared to	final, unified and complete (implied)
Prophets	compared to	his Son
To our fathers	compared to	us

This emphasis on how God has spoken is so strong because that means that what has been said must be taken with the utmost seriousness. Now, the very fact that God has spoken, is itself a fascinating concept. I would love to lecture on that phrase alone. (perhaps tonight) But something happens during this long sentence. The main subject

shifts the attention to another subject. So, although God the Father is the one who has spoken, it is His Son who becomes the focal point before the opening sentence is done. The author draws attention to Christ in a magnificent way utilizing a familiar writing style called a chiasm in order to make a very powerful point.

A1 God spoke to us through his son

B1 whom he appointed the heir of all things

C1 through whom also he created the world.

D1 He is the radiance of the glory of God and

D2 the exact imprint of his nature and

C2 he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

B2 After making purification for sins he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high

A2 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs

So, the big idea is very clear. In this majestic prologue to the book of Hebrews the author is establishing a very important point. Jesus Christ is Supreme! The supremacy of Christ is the reason for worship, joy, life, obedience, faithfulness, hope and perseverance. However, that only is the case for those who truly submit to him. And the reason why this book was written is because most people sadly, do not submit to him. Even many people who claim to follow Christ are deceived.

Because of who Christ is, he has the right (and he exercises that right) to call you to complete trust, obedience, worship, love, commitment and surrender. This is not your life in which you get to do whatever you want, nor is it his job to go along with your plans. Besides, what you want and your plans are so puny, and so trivial. You were made to be thrilled! You were made to be awed! Don't waste your worship!

1. **Who is it that has spoken?** (1-2a) - God has spoken through his most excellent Son.

God spoke in the past with awe-inspiring authority. He did it at many different times and in a variety of ways. At times he spoke directly, other times through visions and dreams, other times through theophanies and still other times through a still small voice. But now, he has done something that tops all of that. Now he has spoken to us through his Son.

The Excellency of Christ pulsates from this text, but what contributes to heightening the intensity of this is seen in the phrase, "in these last days." The point is, God spoke in times past through the prophets, who looked forward to this age. We live in the time they dreamed about. And their dreaming was not about technology but about revelation! The language here that is used speaks of God's final and decisive revelation. God saved the best for last. This last way and last time that he spoke blew everything else away. This time when God spoke, he did it through the most perfect form of self-disclosure, so that there was no excuse for misunderstanding. What God said through his Son is the perfect expression and complete clarification of all that he had spoken through the prophets. The

revelation of Christ removes all excuses for misunderstanding and it heightens the consequences for rebellion and rejection.

A new age has come upon the world. This new age has an end (“last days”). There is a limit to these last days. And we are getting near the end. Life is not going to keep on, the way that it has. Time is running out. But, so that we would know what to think and how to prepare, and what to believe, and what to do, God has not only communicated as he has done in the past, but this time he communicated in a final manner. The mouthpiece of God was none other than God himself in human form. Therefore, what God said was both decisive and final and carries an intrinsic authority that demands submission and trust.

God has spoken finally, decisively and perfectly - are you listening? And this is the reason why the author writes the way he does. Some of you wish that God would make himself more clear. The truth is, God could not make himself more clear. He is at once graciously and devastatingly clear. He is so clear, that all confusion about who he is, what he has done, what he has said, and what he demands is in reality, rebellion. Because of who he is, the stakes are infinitely high.

## 2. What is so excellent about Christ?

### A. **His very being is excellent because he is God.** (3a – D1, D2)

These two phrases are parallel statements intended to say the same thing in a slightly different way. Christ radiates the glory of God because Christ is the perfect, exact, complete, and finest imprint of the very nature of God.

#### a. *Radiance of God’s glory*

Christ radiates the glory of God because he is God. God’s essence is absolute perfection. God is excellence. God is greatness. Therefore, God’s glory is the external emanating of his internal greatness. Like the rays of the sun emanate from the sun, so Christ is the emanation of the very glory of God.

#### b. *Exact imprint of his nature*

The Greek word translated “imprint” is literally the word, character. This word was used by the author in order to express as emphatically, and clearly, and decisively as possible that Jesus Christ is the perfect, complete, visible expression of God, the very God. Do you know what this means? Every aspect of the character of God is put on display in Christ. Jesus is all that God is in character. The God of the OT is seen perfectly in the Jesus of the NT. Christ participates so fully in the very nature of God because he is God. The Son, perfectly reflects the Father. They are so infinitely compatible, that unless the Son took on human flesh, it would be next to impossible to tell them apart.

### B. **His Activity is excellent.** – Everything (2c, 3b – C1, C2)

Now we see the connection between his essence and his activity. Since his very being is the most mind-staggering excellence, we should expect his activity to be staggering as well, which it is. He is...

a. *Creator* – through whom also he created the world (2c)

Christ is the means by which the act of creation took place. All of this is further evidence of his deity. Do you see why? He could not be the agent of creation, if he himself was a created being. Since Christ is the part of the Godhead who did the actual creating it is also very clear that Christ pre-existed since the world came into being through him. Christ is the agent of creation. He is the one through whom God has not only spoken in these last days, he is the one through whom God spoke the world into existence. While the very activity of creation itself is a mystery that we do not yet grasp, we must grapple with this. The word of Christ has so much power and authority that he can by virtue of speaking bring entire galaxies into existence. His commands possess such far-reaching influence that delicate eco-systems function in harmony with orbits. By his word, molecular structures, atomic particles, and DNA strands were brought into being and for thousands of years have functioned, even as they awaited discovery. We think that we are so smart and so advanced because we can build microscopes to view these things, or telescopes to dazzle our brains. Please, do not lose sight of what he is doing here. He is setting you up. Who do you think you are? What right do you think you have to create your own laws in order to pretend that this universe is all about you and that everything has to conform to your demands? Are you out of your mind? Seriously! Go outside and yell as loud as you can and see if you can make a moon. You can speak with your most authoritative and intimidating voice as possible and you can't even make dirt.

We all possess the capacity to be thrilled and awed. We love big movies, big mountains, big oceans, big music, and big storms. We look into the night sky and wonder. How did it all get there? What is it all about? Within our own galaxy there is a star called Eta Carina. This star is roughly 5 million times brighter than the sun. Eta Carina is just one of about 200 – 400 billion stars in our galaxy. Our neighbor, the Andromeda galaxy has about 1 trillion. Our galaxy, (1 of 6 in our local group) is about 10,000 light years from top to bottom and a little over 100,000 years from side to side. If you were traveling at 186,000 miles per second since the time of Abraham to now you would have only covered, 4% of our galaxy. If we think that is amazing, then what do we do with the fact that the images being sent back by the Hubble Space Telescope have led astronomers to estimate that there are about 240 billion galaxies in our visible universe. Why all of that space? Why all of that vastness for this little, rather unimpressive galaxy, with a very unimpressive solar system that revolves around a less than ordinary star, called the sun, around which orbits this little planet, we call earth? Why would God waste so much space in order to house such a tiny little planet? It makes you feel pretty small doesn't it? The point of the universe is to tell us about God.

b. *Sustainer* – he upholds the universe by the word of his power (3b)

Jesus Christ is the one who holds this entire universe together. What is it that keeps molecules from coming apart? What force is it that holds the very building blocks of matter from disintegrating? What philosophical reality or foundation stands underneath all ideas, concepts, language, reasoning, logic and rationality? What is the dynamic that ties all reality together? It is Christ. He made it and holds it all together.

**C. His Position is excellent.** – Enthroned (2b, 3b – B1, B2)

- a. *Heir* – Christ has been appointed as the heir of all things.

He inherits it all. In obedience to his father, he made everything and holds everything and will inherit everything. In the beginning he made it all. In the end he gets it all. In the meantime he holds it all. The language here is almost directly from Psalm 2.8 which makes it clear that as the heir, he is the Messianic King, destined to rule the world.

- b. *Honor* – he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Again the language of Psalm 2 (v.6) is in view. This magnificent Psalm speaks of the day when the Messiah is set upon his throne in undisputed victory, to the terror of his enemies. The position at the right hand of Almighty God is that of the highest honor. But in this text we are told that his seat of honor was granted to him because of his most magnificent accomplishment. And what was that accomplishment? He made purification for sins. Here we are introduced to another important theme. This theme is that of the perfectly sufficient sacrifice of Christ for our sins.

**D. His Word is excellent-** Authority (2a, 4b, A1, A2)

God has spoken to us by his Son who has become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. This last phrase transitions us to the point that we will look at next Sunday. But the big idea is extremely clear. Because the Son is supremely excellent in being, activity and position, then, when he speaks, you had better pay attention.

Jesus Christ is the perfect prophet, no one could speak with such clarity and completeness. Jesus Christ is the perfect priest, no one could offer a sacrifice that would fully and finally pay for our sins. Jesus Christ is the perfect king. His throne is forever, his dynasty and dominion are eternal.

3. **What does this mean?**

This means that there awaits you the greatest of joys if you listen to and obey Christ, who is the greatest of beings. It also means that there awaits you to greatest of judgments if you do not. To not listen or respond to the revelation, the speaking of Christ is the height of arrogance and stupidity. Some of you live as if you are your own law. You are blind. You are foolish. You are in an alternate reality constructed in your own mind, but that

does not really exist. You think that you can do what you want, treat people, even within your own family, however you want? Do you honestly think that you can believe whatever you want and pick and choose whatever ideas that fit your desires? You are not a law unto yourself. We are under the voice the King. And this salvation that he has earned, this salvation that he offers, cannot be neglected, except with the most severe consequences. (2.3) But when you realize how completely excellent Christ is, you do not want to neglect him or his salvation, you want him. You want to make him known no matter what. You want him to be exalted in your life whether by life or by death. Since Christ is the most excellent One, how can you live in such a way to make that obvious? How shall we escape if neglect such a great salvation? We won't. But if we surrender to the Lord of Glory, we will never, ever be let go.