

Hebrews (Part Nine): Chapter 1: Jesus' Exultation And Christianity's Claims

John W. Ritenbaugh
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My sermon today is going to be somewhat different from the kind I have normally given in the past. But I am going to precede it with a more or less normal sermon, only much shorter. And I am going to go back to something that I gave just a little while ago on the calendar. This sermon is going to come in three parts. The first is going to be a brief review of the counting features that was in my last sermon.

To me, the key to unlocking any mystery one might have still holding in his mind within that counting of Jesus *becoming* something He was not before, that term is used in Hebrews 1:4, He *became* something that He was not before. And thoughts of Jesus having to qualify to hold that position is solved in understanding the timing linkage between Psalm 2 and its very clear statement of God's proclamation regarding begetting His Son. Jesus is twice called "His Son" in Psalm 2. And in addition to that, the Anointed One and the Messiah, besides. That is pretty clear. Everyone here ought to be able to understand that the Son of God, the Anointed One, and the Messiah are all the same person.

I want you to turn first of all to John the first chapter. We spent a lot of time a sermon or two going through John the first chapter, but we are only going to focus right here and now on verse 17.

John 1:17-18 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time.
[notice this next sentence] The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

The keywords there: the only begotten Son. Remember Psalm 2 and the Son that is there.

First, identifying who the Son referred to in Psalm 2 is very important to one's clear understanding. This is because that proclamation is made to only one person in all of mankind's history and that person was not an angel. This is irrefutable. The Son is Jesus of Nazareth. That is not hard to understand. The one called the Son in Psalm 2 was Jesus of Nazareth and He is the only begotten Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father. He has declared Him.

We are going to turn from here to Luke the first chapter.

Luke 1:26-35 Now in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth [you can see where we are headed], to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. [Can you see all of this is coming together and it is focusing on one person.] And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women." But when she saw him, she was troubled at this saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest [Again, you see, we are focused in on one person in all the Bible history who was the Son of God, the *only* begotten Son of God.]; and the Lord will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore also that Holy One [see, she has a Holy One within her] who is to be born will be called the Son of God."

The whole problem, brethren, is solved.

The declaration in Psalm 2 was made to *the* one person the New Testament names as the only the unique, one of a kind, begotten Son of God—Son of the Highest. He is clearly named here and He was, as John 1 clearly

identifies, also God right in the womb, even as we know the One we know as the Father was God. The One in the womb was God and the Father was also God. They were of the same kind! And though written as part of what is today Psalm 2, many hundreds of years before the New Testament began appearing, it was actually literally assigned and declared by God the Father when Jesus was born of the virgin, Mary, thus beginning a human life period of 33 and one-half years during which Jesus' ministry occurred.

Now listen carefully. The office of High Priest was not something Jesus had to qualify for in the ordinary sense, that is, qualify to do the job. He was qualified already being God when the prophecy was originally uttered, and being God even as He was conceived in Mary's womb and became human too. And the prophecy ended with His death paying for our sins and His resurrection occurred. Thus God's purpose of a fellow human who was both God and man at one and the same time and, very important, sinless too, like the animal sacrifices, fulfilled the need of a fitting person, both human and divine at one at the same time, as the sacrifice to pay for our sins.

Thus at the moment of His birth, He became exalted to what He never literally was before. The New Covenant's—mark that in your memory—High Priest. He was already in and on the job performing it throughout His ministry. He did not have to qualify, for He already was God.

The problem in that first century arose because the Jews, until they were called, were not aware of this prophetic reality as the apostles already were. There is no mystery there. He did not have to qualify for anything because He was already God. He had already been performing the responsibility. So He as God, let us say, as Melchizedek, was free to do all the counseling He was called upon to do as if He was a high priest. That is why I emphasize to you that this is the New Covenant High Priest that replaced the Old Covenant. So that is how the position was filled by God. He put His own Son on the job, just as His own Son was already the King, and His own Son was the payment for our sins.

That is something you do have to think through. There is no doubt about it. But it was done legally by God and in a good manner and order by Him.

Now the second part of this sermon is going to be quite a bit different because what I have done is this (I will have a little bit of a preface for this and then I will go on): There is no doubt that Hebrews the first chapter is among the most impressive, thought-provoking chapters in the entire Bible, and knowing some of the background of why it was written allows all of those of a clear understanding of why every converted Jew owes Jesus Christ his life for all eternity. The incredible reality is that the same is true for all of mankind. The Jews were just central to this issue at that time when the New Covenant needed one who was going to be High Priest.

To me, Hebrews 1 explicitly states Jesus' qualifications for the high priest responsibility of maintaining the office. So I am going to present you with a fairly quick overview of it before continuing on to chapter 2, and then I am going to give you some information as to why all of mankind should be searching out Christianity with all diligence. (That is really what my sermon today is going to be about.) But you know that mankind is not doing that. I will tell you why they are not doing it, but why they should, because I have been thinking about this for a good while.

Now, one of the author's links between the first and second chapters of Hebrews is the direct and indirect references to the threefold offices of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King. Jesus Christ is all three at one and the same time and that, brethren, is impressive. It should be impressive to us. This is the Leader every knowledgeable person should greatly desire to serve under because, under His leadership, great, awesome things are going to be accomplished.

In the first chapter, the author describes the Son as the person through whom God spoke prophetically *as* Son. We went through that. That appears in Hebrews 1:2. The Father "spoke Son." Do you remember that? In Hebrews 1:3 the author speaks of Him as the High Priest who provided purification of sins. Then, beginning in verse 6 of Hebrews 1 on through the end of the chapter, He is seen prophetically as ruling from His throne in the Kingdom and thus there is kingly authority in this Being as well.

Now, these specific verses are looking far into the future, assuring us that His being in the office as King is a settled issue for all eternity. We might

ask: Why is Jesus holding all three of these offices? The Father is not dumb. The answer is given in Hebrews 1:9. He is placed in that office by God because *He loves righteousness and He hates lawlessness*. In a way we can say that God is not trusting those offices to anybody else. He proved that by His sinless life and therefore "God, Your God" (this is what it says), "has anointed You [the Christ] with the oil of gladness more than your companions," all of his friends. This is no idle saying. Jesus was appointed because He was head and shoulders above all others in terms of being qualified to lead.

These brief statements set the stage for the rest of the epistle to continue. Now, here is what I am going to do as we lead into the rest of the epistle. I have just given you a brief summary of this first chapter because in a major way Hebrews 1 is a primer of what He has already done and can continue to expand upon for the God Family members.

Never forget that Jesus dogmatically stated that, without Me you can do nothing. We need Him and nobody can take His place. He is it! He is the door to our salvation for all eternity. He has the power to save us and He wants to do it. He loves righteousness and if you want to please Him, you be righteous too. Because, in a way, we can say it got Him where He is. He is the link between life and death. He is that important to our well being.

Now this sets the stage for chapter 2 to begin with such urgency. That is why Hebrews 1 is so impressive. The author, whoever it was, maybe the apostle Paul, he was writing his heart out regarding Jesus' qualifications to be the high priest and to continue on with us. First, I want you to turn to Hebrews 2.

Hebrews 2:1-3 Therefore [there is a collecting statement] we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him.

In chapter 2 these three offices He holds—Son, King, and High Priest—are followed through on, just briefly mentioning them for a while. The author

refers to Jesus as Lord in chapter 2 and verse 3 when announcing salvation, crowned with glory and honor as King in chapter 2 and verses 5-9, and as a merciful and faithful High Priest in service to God in chapter 2, verses 14-18. We are going to, not today but later on, go through this in much more detail because it is foundational to the rest of the book.

I want you to think briefly about the way cultural events are developing here in the Israelitish nations, most especially in the USA. Because we live here, we are experiencing what is happening to this culture, which is in no way anywhere near as moral as when it was founded some 240 years ago. Now, I want you to think about the claims of the Father and the Son and Their way of life, named Christianity, has on mankind. But it is being shamed even by those who claim to adhere to its demands, but who do not truly represent it in such a way as to bring glory to God by their manifestations of it.

So what I am going to give you in the rest of this message are my summaries of remarks written by commentator Albert Barnes and his staff, which they inserted between chapters 1 and 2 in their commentary, as sort of a bridge or possibly a preamble to chapter 2 and the remainder of the epistle to the Hebrews. I believe that they were so moved by what Hebrews 1 says that they were motivated to try to draw up a list of remarks (listen to this) regarding the remarkable state of mankind's virtually no response to the amazing truth regarding life and the future as compared to the profound revelations given in chapter 1.

Now, the overall question they ask in these remarks is: Does not mankind have any sense of obligation to God, Jesus Christ, and the Christian religion for the truths made so readily available to them? Albert Barnes and his group's overall approach in their remarks is (listen to this because everything revolves around what they gave as their heading), does not Christianity have a claim on mankind's attention? I told you earlier, this is something that I have been thinking about and this is why this really impressed me, that is, what Barnes and his group wrote. Because I have wondered often regarding this question: What does it take to impress us so that we humans will seriously react to Them and consider what the Father and the Son reveal?

The term "claim" was used by Barnes in the sense of a demand. The term makes a sense of an assertion of a right, that is, Christianity has a right, if

Christianity were human, for something due in response to something freely given. It is exceedingly interesting, of course, in Romans 1:20, that God, who cannot lie, confirms that mankind has *no excuse* before Him because mankind, from beginning to end, is rejecting God's truth. It might be helpful for you to note that Albert Barnes was an Israelite, a Brit, and it seems that the British people are a great deal like we Americans, especially when we are cousins by blood, when it comes to responding to God. He and his group put together some very interesting thoughts.

What follows now are my summaries (I have 12 of them) of their much longer reasonings on these claims. These are things we need to think about.

Claim Number One (that Christianity has on mankind): The first claim is illustrated clearly in God's dealings with Adam and Eve and their response. Christianity, the true way of life of the Father and the Son, has a claim on mankind's attention and loyalty because mankind is *Their* creation. Consider that. Every single one of us has life because of what *They* did. They can demand things of us, and the clear aim of Their concerns from beginning to the end of the Scriptures. In fact, Their message is aimed directly at mankind and the Father and Son do not hide from mankind. However, the Scripture's truths are virtually ignored by the overwhelming majority of the citizenry in terms of real life.

Barnes and his group complain that even the Sermon on the Mount, directly given by the Redeemer Himself, though admired by many as wonderful advice, is ignored in terms of real life, in terms of obedience. How do we know this is true? Because right within the specific sermon, Jesus directly stated God's law is not done away.

God dealt with Adam and Eve and what did Adam and Eve do? Representing all of mankind, they took of the tree anyway, and the rest of mankind has followed them, and that includes us.

Claim Number Two: We have no excuse before God. Jesus of Nazareth was divine and mankind's Creator, therefore, He individually has a claim. The Bible makes this exceedingly clear. It is so clear that Barnes' group wondered that it is even questioned. The very fact that God sent Jesus Christ to speak to us of the Father and His purpose is itself a tremendous honor for

mankind. Why? Because One of such authority has spoken and what He said has a claim on our attention.

The things the Bible records He did within the eyesight of thousands on occasions are a telling witness. Yet those miraculous events are treated as though they are fairy tales. Those things were impossible for a mere created creature like man. If what He did on those occasions defines (listen to this) the distinction that mankind makes between a created man and Creator God, then man generally has little or absolutely no concept whatever of what constitutes a divine being. Boy, I will tell you, that is a mouthful. And I know that you will admit it, just looking at the world out there. They have no idea how great God is and He has a demand on every single person's life. And He is not forcing the issue—not yet.

Barnes went on. He said, "What is it that separates man from God?" He answers that: "It is God's powers, combined with the purity of God's usage of those powers." Conclusion: Jesus is indeed divine. He is God in the flesh. Every move He makes is for our well being and yet mankind still has little or no respect for what He said or did. They ask a question at the end of this claim. "Can any man [human] quiet the roaring winds or calm the waves of a raging sea, or heal a dying child from the distance of at least twenty miles just by saying a few words?" Does Jesus have a claim on us as our Creator? Absolutely.

Claim Number Three: Jesus Christ's witness to the world of the Father and of Their purpose. When John 1 is combined with Hebrews 1, the evidence of Jesus' witness showed the record of His divine glory, thus leaving mankind with a manifestation that renders mankind without a valid excuse. These three witnesses, John 1, Hebrews 1, and Jesus Himself, show the glory of God. Perhaps this illustration from nature will help a bit. By shining the sun is revealed, and so likewise the Son of God showed forth a brilliance in His demeanor like the sun in all of its glory. And it was recorded by far, far, far more witnesses than on any other ancient figure who might be named.

Mankind keeps records. If you want to ever see something, read the first couple of chapters of *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. The author, a man by the name McDowell, tells you how many records mankind has ever found of some ancient person that is known to everybody. How many records they

have actually found proof of their existence. And when you see that, compare how many records there are of Jesus' existence and what He did. It is overwhelming.

It is that witness made by Jesus Christ by whom God was made known to mankind. By means of the sun's light and radiation all of nature is dependent. In like manner, it is by the light of Jesus' life and warmth emanating from the way of His life's messages, mankind is absolutely dependent even in their ignorance. It is interesting, he goes on, that in Psalm 84:11, it states, "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk up rightly." The conclusion of this claim: His generosity and service to us is overwhelming to those who do think.

Claim Number Four: Jesus Christ has made an atonement for sin that should place a claim on mankind's conduct. Hebrews 1:3 clearly and dogmatically informs us that He did it *by Himself*. Our Creator did that. Does He have a claim on our life? No animal, whatever, was involved. No other man and no angel did this. And the bulk of educated mankind knows this and ignores any fact whatever of what this opens up for mankind's profitable use in its life.

What does His sacrifice do? It opens the door to God's offer of salvation to those He calls and though many may be somewhat convicted regarding His sacrifices, they apparently have no faith in the fact that Jesus' sacrifice is effectively guaranteed by the authority of the Father. Neither of Them is going to go back on what They said they will do. But sin, because man does not consider it, continues on.

Claim Number Five: Jesus has been exalted to be at the right side of the Father in heaven. He rose from the dead by the power of the Father to be at His side in order to work together with the Father in Their plan to complete making mankind in Their image. Now here it comes. *No plan of Theirs has ever failed* even in the smallest degree. And yet faith in that sacrifice goes to little use because Christ is not accessed for His help to produce the fruit that glorifies God. The conclusion: Mankind as a whole is showing it cannot be bothered which such a "triviality" as praying.

Claim Number Six: It is absolutely right for us to worship the Lord Jesus Christ. When He was born in the world as a human the angels were *required* to give homage by worshipping Him, and even the wise men who came from the east to witness of His birth, worshipped Him and were not rebuked by God for so doing. It was a lawful thing to do. These witnesses all worshipped Him even though as a newborn, before He did anything as a God should do. Therefore, He was always God, even within the womb He was divine, not merely an angelic messenger. Every act of His was defined as the living God gave us evidence of His authority.

Claim Number Seven: Hebrews 1:8, along with John 1:1-2, makes exceedingly clear it is right to address Jesus as God. We cannot go wrong if we address Him as such because the Bible, the sacred Scriptures, clearly does. In terms of character and purpose, He is exactly and precisely the perfect image of the One called the Father. They are different personalities, but at the same time, exactly identical in purposes and character representations of each other.

Claim Number Eight: In one sense, the Kingdom of God under Jesus Christ as its King already exists (this is why there is a claim there), because those converted already have the same Spirit as the Father and Son who are also citizens of it. Thus we begin to bear the Father and Son's attitude and character image. So states Philippians 3:20. In addition, Hebrews 1:8-9 reveal Him as already anointed and on its throne as King. It simply has not yet been established on earth. It is a Kingdom devoted to righteousness and its already existing presence bids us to further join with it. Look how many people are moving all over the earth right now trying to break into places where they can "live"? They are seeking a better life. Meanwhile, the Kingdom of God might be had right from where they are, or were.

Claim Number Nine: Here is an interesting thought regarding what we might face and this gives Christianity a tremendously important position to have a claim on mankind's attention and therefore service. In one sense, the earth and the life it bears has never stopped changing. Witness the Noachian Flood as God exhibited some of His powers. Hebrews 1:10-12, combined with the prophecies in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Revelation especially, show conclusively that even heaven, along with many, many portions of the

earth, may undergo tremendous changes as Christ's return nears. Did you know that heaven is going to undergo changes? It is. It is going to be changed in these final days.

Who knows what mankind is going to have to witness and endure before this portion of God's purposes are completed as God exhibits these powers of and to His children? I believe that the greater changes are coming as we get closer and closer to the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His Kingdom. Christianity's claim, especially on us brethren, represents safety to be at His side. Do you want that? Christ has a claim on us and safety is to be at His side.

Claim Number Ten: Malachi 3:6 says, "I am God, I change not." Hebrews 13:8 states that, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." We may indeed have to put our life's trust in some dangerous situations if the Kingdom claims us as one of its own. Under men, governments go through constant changes, and there exists almost constant changes as enemies vie back and forth by means of warfare of some sort, including political ones, to gain control.

But there is One, the Bible says, who "sticks closer than a brother." Our attachment to Him, through our Redeemer and Brother, must be unaffected by all external changes going on on earth. We are being given the time needed to bind us to Him. He is safety because the dissolution of all things, though out of sight right now, can easily be brought into view by our God as He moves forward to the conclusion of His purpose. That one ought to touch us all. Safety is to be at Christ's side.

Claim Number Eleven: Here is a reality that I believe should restore some confidence in us of man's importance in God's purposes. Hebrews 1:14 makes this unusually clear. In God's purpose for man we witness man's dignity from God's point of view. And dignity is being used in this sense of "worth or value." In God's mind (listen to this), man is worth so much that He has set us as served by angels! Maybe that means little to you because you are such of this world that it takes an awful lot to impress you. But in this world, human kings are served by a retinue of other lesser men. However, in God's purpose, His child is served by angels.

Think of how much you are worth to Him. Angels, though of far, far, *far* greater powers than men, are attending us! What does that indicate of our value in our Creator's mind? The humblest of converted frail humanity, who may even be sick with a wasting disease and may have never even completed the equivalent of an elementary school education, is waited upon, served for our well being, by these highly intelligent and powerful beings in order to help us be ushered into God's Kingdom. God, angels' Creator, has convinced them of our importance to Him. Therefore, they serve us and we are precious beyond reason.

Claim Number Twelve: Christianity has a major claim on us because man must seriously consider what God has done for man. This is even apart from angels. He has thoughtfully created man in His image in the first place. We are not created in the image of dogs or cats or buffalo, or even angels. We are created in *His* image! He designed and is carrying out a purpose for our salvation that we might live created in His image and carrying out whatever operations that He plans for the future expansion of His Family Kingdom.

He has provided us with a Savior-Redeemer to help make up for our self-centered failures. He has shared with us His Spirit that we might have the powers we need at our command to purposefully prepare for what He promises. He gives us an awareness of Him and His purposes so we might make the right choices concerning agreement. He has made us aware of His goals for our well being that we might glorify Him by making the best use of our life.

God may not be paving the way for us, but He is rightfully challenging us within our individual abilities through this awareness that our choices are in agreement with His plans. And what must we do, brethren? Believe Him. That is what we must do. Believe Him and follow through.

Well, that is my sermon for this day. I wanted to send you off to the Feast of Tabernacles with something to challenge your mind about how much of a claim God has on *your* life, *your* mind, what *you* do in representing Him. He wants you to be filled with hope that He is *for* you. He is not against you.

He may make it tough for you from time to time. He may not heal you when you would like. On the other hand, He might put you into challenging

situations that scare the pants off you and then come to your rescue when the time is right. He is going to test you. He is going to try you. He is going to see if you are going to be faithful to the commitment that you made to Him when you made this New Covenant when you got baptized.

He is for you, not against you, and His Son is there to help you all along the way.