

THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST – Part 2

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4. CHRIST IS THE SUSTAINER

Deism: A view that God exists but does not interfere with it. He is unloving and uninvolved. He is like a watchmaker who made the watch and left it to itself to run.

Scripture: Hebrews 1:3, “he **upholds the universe** by the word of his power.”

❖ **Colossians 1:17**, “And he is before all things, and **in him all things hold together.**”

Upholds: Supports, Sustains, or Maintains. It is not passive but active control towards His intended goal.

In present continuous tense, meaning, Christ is continuously upholding the universe by the word of his power. Interpreted, “To cause to continue to exist”

Upholds the Universe (not just the world): All existing matter and space (planets, sun, moon, stars, galaxies...etc.)

“By the word of his power”: Just as Christ created the universe by His word, He sustains the universe by His word. This speaks about Christ’s sovereignty.

❖ **Hebrews 11:3**, “By faith we understand that **the universe was created by the word of God**, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.” **Why word?** Because there is nothing existing apart from Him to create something out of it. The only option was the word.

❖ **Hebrews 1:3**, “he **upholds the universe** by the word of his power.”

Note: Christ is **the creator** of all things, **the heir** of all things, and **the sustainer** of all things. ALL THESE FACTORS ALSO SPEAK ABOUT CHRIST’S DISTINCTNESS [SEPERATION] FROM THE CREATION.

Pantheism: God is identical with the universe. No distinction.

Why is idolatry a great sin? God is the creator and sustainer of all things. He is distinct from creation. In worshipping idols, people equate God with the creation and worship the creation instead of the Creator who is distinct from the creation.

▶ Consider God’s Word in **Isaiah 40:18-23**,

To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?

An idol! A craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains.

He who is too impoverished for an offering chooses wood that will not rot; he seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an idol that will not move.

Do you not know? Do you not hear?

Has it not been told you from the beginning?

Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness...

- ▶ There are approximately 200 billion trillion stars in the universe.
- ▶ Roughly 150 billion stars born per year in the entire Universe.
- ▶ Counting at a rate of 5 stars per second, this would take you around 5.8 thousand billion years.

Isaiah 40:25-26, To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.

Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these?

He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing

❖ **Hebrews 1:3**, “he **upholds the universe** by the word of his power.”

H. C. G. Moule, “He keeps the cosmos from becoming a chaos.”

- Why is it that the other planets do not collide with one another or with the planet earth?
- Why is it that stars do not fall upon the earth?
- The sun contains the temperature between 15 million degrees Celsius to 6000 degrees. If it were any closer to us we would burn up; if it were any farther away we would freeze.
- Why is it that the earth, which spins around the sun, does not wander away from the sun? (Distance between the earth and the sun is about 150 million kms and it takes 365.256 days for the earth to travel around the sun)
- Why is it that the waters (covers 71% of the earth’s surface) do not cover the land?
 - **Jeremiah 5:22**, ‘Do you not fear Me?’ declares the Lord. ‘Do you not tremble in My presence? For I have placed the sand as a boundary for the sea, An eternal decree, so it cannot cross over it. Though the waves toss, yet they cannot prevail; Though they roar, yet they cannot cross over it.
- Why is it that our bodies do not grow out of control?
- Why is it that the devil and the demons do not destroy the whole world at once?
 - This is because the Lord Jesus sustains the whole universe. It is entirely dependent on Him.

Personal application: The Christ who is upholding the whole universe is upholding your life too, even amidst suffering. Is it too difficult for Him to empower you to overcome temptations? Is it too difficult for Him to bear your burdens? Cling to Him.

“He **upholds** the universe by the word of his power”—also speaks the fact that everything is dependent on Him for sustenance and sufficiency, including your life.

5. CHRIST IS THE REDEEMER

Scripture: Hebrews 1:3, After making purification for sins [PURIFICATION], he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high [ENTHRONEMENT]...

The great work of Christ: Creation and Redemption. The Son who created is also the Son who redeemed.

Why did Christ make purification for sins?

- ▶ Sin is offense/disobedience against the Holy God.
- ▶ Opposite of *purification* is *defilement*: We have become wretched before God.
- ▶ We have not committed a sin; we have committed sins, many countless sins.
- ▶ Because of our sins against God, we were separated from God and have become object of His wrath and condemnation.

What is Purification?

- ▶ “After making purification for sins”, pointing to the high priestly work of Christ in His incarnation, which is the thrust of the book of Hebrews
- ▶ Purification for sins in the context of Hebrews is therefore *propitiation for sins...*
Propitiation means satisfying the righteous indignation of God.
- ▶ Purification for sins speaks about every sin. There is not a single sin for which Christ did not atone for. *The only sin Christ did not atone for is the sin of unbelief.*
- ▶ Purification speaks about cleansing by the blood: Only God in flesh (Christ) by His blood can atone (purify) for our sins by shedding His blood.
 - ❖ **Hebrews 9:22**, without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.
 - **World religions:** through religious and good works, you must purify your sins. Impossible! None of us can purify our sin.
- ▶ Purification speaks about three things: Forgiving the sin and justifying the sinner and accessibility to the Holy God.

- ▶ **Remember Christ's majesty:** The Creator, Sustainer, and the Heir of the whole universe (the infinite God). Why should He be **mindful** of us, sinners and small creatures? Why should such a Most High God **become** a small creature, a human being? Why should He **care** about saving us? Doesn't that show His great love and grace?
- ▶ **Through faith in Christ's work on the cross:** we have forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, become children of God, and partake in God's inheritance through Christ.

Personal application: If you are an unbeliever, do you believe in Christ's atonement for your sins? If you are a believer, do you continuously turn to Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and for the empowerment to live a holy life?

- ❖ **Hebrews 1:3,** After making purification for sins, **he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...** [exaltation]

He sat down: Christ's earthly mission (purification for sins) is finished. Just as **God rested on the seventh day** means he ceased from creating anything further, **Christ sat down** means His purification for sins has been done once and for all with no further requirement of atonement.

He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high: Right hand is the position of honour, authority, and power, sharing the Father's Throne. The most exalted position, royal supremacy.

- ❖ **1 Peter 3:22,** who [Christ] has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

The Majesty on high: The transcendency of God (high, above, incomparable)

Equality and Subordination: **Equality** of the Son to the Father **in essence** (all the substance of deity) and **Subordination** of the Son to the Father **in function** (Son is not equal to the Father but in submission to Him in His role)

- ▶ **The heresy of Subordinationism** is a serious Trinitarian error. It assumes that God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are not merely relationally subordinate to God the Father, but also subordinate in their nature and being.

Leon Morris: His exaltation to the highest place in heaven after his work on earth was done did not mark some new dignity but his re-entry into his right place.

- ❖ **John 17:5,** And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence **with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.**

In Christ's exaltation, the Scripture records:

❖ **Revelation 3:21**, The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, **as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.**

- **John Piper:** This is a promise to everyone who conquers, that is, who presses on in faith to the end (1 John 5:4), in spite of every threatening pain and luring, sinful pleasure. So if you are a true believer in Jesus, you will sit on the throne of the Son of God who sits on the throne of God the Father. I take “throne of God” to signify the right and authority to rule the universe.

Personal application: Worship the Father and the Son. **Hope:** one day we will sit with Christ on the throne and reign with Him. Persevere.

Hebrews 1:1-3, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things [**Christ is the Inheritor**], through whom also he created the world [**Christ is the Creator**]. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature [**Christ is the Reflector**], and he upholds the universe by the word of his power [**Christ is the Sustainer**]. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...[**Christ is the Redeemer**]”

Discussion Questions:

1. How is Christ sustaining the universe and how is this both astounding and comforting to you?
2. What is the necessity of Christ’s purification for sins and how is that encouraging to you?
3. What is the heresy of subordinationism?
4. What does “Christ sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” speak about? What is the hope that you have in Christ’s exaltation?