

“Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person and upholding all things by the word of His power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high”.

The acclaim given to Jesus is well deserved. He alone could do this. God did it through him, as God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself 2 Corinthians 5v19, however it is true to say in context, that Jesus did this by himself. God was unable to do so as He is *“of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity”* Habakkuk 1v13. He has chosen to limit Himself in this way as, dwelling in unapproachable light, the alternative does not go well for the sinner. As such the Father has deputed to the Son this honour which he then acquitted with diligence and perfection within his own constraints. In a sense then God could not do this because God could not die for sinners. The concept of God dying is absurd but has taken hold in the mind of billions!

He has earned the honour of two thousand years of intimate association with the Father (His God and our God) in heaven learning the craft of beneficial governance from the Creator Himself. Together they share the pleasures and the pain of presiding over wayward mankind, although we cannot see this for ourselves, except with the eye of faith Hebrews 2v8. This sweet fellowship will only be interrupted when Jesus has to “rule in the midst of his enemies” by returning once more to the earth, Psalm 110v2.

Whether the Father and the Son reside within the created universe and therefore currently inhabit a physical body now, or reside outside of creation and therefore have no need of the physical limitation of a body, we are not told. It is interesting to learn that Stephen saw *“the son of man standing on the right hand of God”* Acts 7v55, which tends to suggest the first of these. Jesus would normally be seating but was seen by Stephen animated with concern for the disciple, his Brotherly love stirred him into activity.

God is a person and we are not only wrong but are offensive to God when we deny this, if true. The Greek word used here is hypostasis, which literally means “what lies under”. As such, we cannot correctly cite this verse as proof for the person of God directly, but indirectly it has much to teach regarding the way God is, and how He wishes to be known.

A better proof would be the use of soul and also emotions with regard to God, see Genesis 6v6 *“And it repented YHWH that He had made man on the earth and it grieved Him at His heart”.*

Hebrews 3v9-11 *“When your fathers TEMPTED me PROVED me and saw my works forty years. Wherefore was I GRIEVED with that generation and said they do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways. So, I swear in my WRATH they shall not enter into my rest.”*

Judges 10v16 *“His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel”.* Only a person or living thing has a soul. Animals have souls, Genesis 1v20 see margin, but are they fully to be regarded as persons?

What is it about God’s person that Jesus is the express image of? Is it His physical form? God cares little for the outward, He looks on the heart, 1 Samuel 16v7 *“But the LORD said unto Samuel look not on his countenance or on the height of his stature, because I*

have refused him, for the LORD seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance but the LORD lokketh on the heart". The size of a person, the beauty of his countenance is of little importance to the Eternal. He is more interested in the internal character of a person not their physical appearance. This is taught through out scripture.

In context Jesus BEING the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, accomplished the purging of our sins and was rewarded for it with immortality. If we were supposed to learn that Jesus became the brightness of His glory and became the express image of His person at immortality, then why are we not told this? The use of this verb "being" in contrast with "became" implies the opposite. This being so, it is the characteristics of God that the Son embodied which are crucial not that Jesus became immortal subsequently. Important though that is, becoming immortal was part of the reward for loving obedience and is not part of the mechanism of how and why Jesus could purge our sins himself. He did that first.

The characteristics of God are given throughout the Bible. One passage which lists many of them is in Exodus 34v6,7 *"The LORD The LORD God merciful and gracious long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands and forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin and that will by no means clear the guilty visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation"*. These characteristics are being put into practise by the Father and the Son in their benign rulership over the whole earth, which still contains elements of judgement as almost two thousand years of human history establishes. The sinful nations are judged now by Heaven, and will also be judged more vehemently in the time of trouble such as never was, which is still to come, Daniel 12v1.

Jesus exhibited the traits which he inherited from his Father before he died on the cross to purge our sins. He was merciful towards the woman caught in adultery, John 8v11. Gracious towards his servants Revelation 22v21. Long suffering both now Revelation 6v10 and previously Hebrews 12v3. His goodness was always seen Luke 18v19. Truth was the hallmark of his life John 14v6. He was also judgmental.

It is often thought that Jesus just forgives everyone but it is telling that when he says *"Father forgive them for they know not what they do"* in Luke 23v34 he is speaking of ignorant Roman soldiers who cast lots for his garment, not for the authorities both Jewish and Roman who suffered the consequences of their implication in the rejection of God's Son and who would not be forgiven for their transgression but reap payment in blood so that it was to become a time of great tribulation as seen in AD70 with the slaughter and suffering of a generation who experienced the Messiah. They called it down upon themselves Matthew 27v25.

Jesus **was** also God manifest in the flesh. The glory of YHWH does not require to be just physically manifested like the angels manifest Him, but also it can also be manifest in character, as Jesus manifested Him before he was also glorified in his flesh. That Jesus did glorify God in the likeness of sin's flesh is something we must never lose sight of, as it should spur us on to strive to emulate him in our more limited way. Do this now we cannot wait until immortality when it will be too late to start such an important work!

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the angels, believed on in the

world, received up into glory" 1 Timothy 3v16. This was expressly part of the mystery of godliness which links the reader to our verse for consideration, *"the express image of His person"*.

It was in *"these last days"* (of Judah's commonwealth) that Jesus was so manifested. If the tenor of the passage is a fixation on his future physical glory, then because we cannot yet see him thus, then this distracts from the force of the passage that this is the evidence now presented for consideration that God HATH spoken (past tense) unto us by His Son.

In context, what Jesus did, resulted in his elevation, being made so much better than them, **not physically** because he is now the same celestial substance as they, but because his characteristics were divine, and that when present in flesh he showed that when true Godly love is elevated, God is glorified!

He hath *"by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they"*. It was a moral superiority that Jesus evidenced over the angels. First the moral superiority over men and angels, then the physical elevation above men to be equal unto the angels, Luke 20v36

What a God who can accomplish such wonders! What a saviour who was so determined to let love be the triumphant force in his life! What a responsibility entrusted to the disciples! Only those who perceive these things can be the One Body of Christ because he is their head providing guidance and direction *"by the power of His Word"*!