

## 24.4

### Images and Titles for Jesus in Hebrews

One way to examine the Christology of Hebrews is to note the various titles, images, and categories that it uses to describe Jesus.

As in most writings of the New Testament, he is called:

- “Lord” (1:10; 2:3; 7:14; 13:20)
- “Son of God” or simply the “Son” (1:2, 5, 8; 3:6; 4:14; 5:5, 8; 6:6; 7:3, 28; 10:29)

What is most intriguing, however, are all the designations applied to Jesus in this book that are not used widely (if at all) elsewhere.

Jesus is referred to as:

- “heir” (1:2; cf. Mark 12:7; Rom. 8:17)
- “firstborn” (1:6; cf. Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15, 18)
- “pioneer” (2:10; 12:2)
- “the one who sanctifies” (2:11; cf. John 17:19; Acts 26:18; 1 Cor. 1:2, 30)
- “apostle” (3:1)
- “builder of a house” (3:3; cf. 1 Pet. 2:5)
- “source of eternal salvation” (5:9)
- “forerunner” (6:20)
- “guarantee” (7:22)
- “minister” (8:2)

- “mediator” (8:6; 9:15; 12:24; cf. 1 Tim. 2:5)
- “perfecter” (12:2)
- “great shepherd of the sheep” (13:20; cf. John 10:1–18; 1 Pet. 2:25)
- “God” (1:8; cf. John 20:28; Titus 2:13)

Luke Timothy Johnson has noted that many of these affirmations might be understood as applying to two aspects of Christ’s work.<sup>1</sup> First, Jesus Christ brings salvation from God to humanity; thus he is apostle, source of eternal salvation, the one who sanctifies, shepherd, minister, builder, guarantee. Second, Jesus Christ brings humans to God (as the first human being to realize the complete obedience that is God’s plan for all); thus he is heir, firstborn, pioneer, perfecter, forerunner. The image of mediator fits both aspects, as does the letter’s favorite image for Jesus: high priest.

1. See Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 48–49.