Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews - Lesson 3

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LESSON III

THE ETERNAL SON OF GOD IS "BETTER THAN"
THE ANGELS—Hebrews 1:4-14

THE DEITY OF CHRIST PROVED FROM THE HEBREW
OLD TESTAMENT

In our former lessons we have seen that the Epistle to
the Hebrews proves that the Lord Jesus Christ is "better
than" the very best that Judaism had to offer—that He is
"better than" the prophets, "better than" the holy angels,
"better than" Moses and Aaron; that He established a "bet­
ter covenant" upon "better promises" with a "better hope"
of a "better resurrection" because His precious blood "speak­
eth better things than that of Abel." Therefore, in order
to establish in the Christian faith the true believers in Christ
Jesus, and in order to warn those who are intellectually
convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was their Messiah, yet
who were not regenerated, of the danger of returning to
Judaism; in order to accomplish this two-fold purpose, the
inspired apostle wrote this wonderful epistle.

In our last lesson we saw the abundant proof that Christ
is "better than" the prophets of Israel's Old Testament days.
In the lesson before us we shall see abundant proof also that
Christ Jesus is "better than" the angels of heaven, mighty
and powerful though they are. Indeed, we shall devote
two lessons to this division of the book; for chapter two
continues the argument that Christ is "better than" the
angels, and we shall have time only for the remainder of
chapter one today.

We have already seen that chapter one proves that Jesus
of Nazareth was always the eternal Son of God; and that
chapter two proves that this eternal God became a perfect
Man, in order that He might die for sinners. Seven Old
Testament passages are quoted in chapter one to show the
Hebrews that their own Old Testament set forth the deity
of Christ in His superiority to angels; four Old Testament
passages are quoted in the second chapter to prove to them
that their own sacred Scriptures also foretold His coming into the world as the lowly Saviour who was to "taste death for every man."

It was a weighty argument, convincing and beyond contradiction this marshalling of an array of Old Testament Scriptures to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was the One of whom all the prophets had spoken, the very Christ of God. Every devout Hebrew accepted the Old Testament as the inspired Word of God. And here the Holy Spirit is telling God's chosen people that the claims of the Lord Jesus are in exact harmony with their own sacred Scriptures. Once we grasp the significance of this fact, the beautiful simplicity of the passage before us today, in Heb. 1:4-14, is awe-inspiring. First there is the statement that the Son of God is "better than" the angels. Then there is the forceful list of Old Testament quotations to prove the statement, quotations linked together by the connecting words, "And again," "And," or some such term. If you have a Revised Version of the book of Hebrews, my friend, look at the arrangement of these quotations on the page, and their forcefulness will impress you. Most of these seven passages are taken from the Psalms; and the Psalter is the Jewish hymnal, a book of Hebrew poems. The Revised Version prints them on the page in their truly poetic form; and there these seven Old Testament quotations stand out as separate and apart from the connecting words which link them together. In our lesson today we shall use the Revised Version altogether in quoting them.

In verse four the Holy Spirit introduces the argument that Jesus Christ, God's Son, is "better than" the angels by saying,

"... having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they."

Now the Hebrew objector may well have asked the apostle Paul, "By what authority do you make such claims for the Lord Jesus? We believe that angels are next to God in power and holiness." And in reply the apostle seems to have said, "My authority is God's own statement concerning His Son, as recorded in your own Scriptures." Then Paul proceeded to quote the seven passages found in Heb. 1:5-13. Not only so, but having quoted a passage, he contrasted the Bible teaching concerning the Son of God with that which has to do with angels. And thus this book of contrasts is seen to be convincing, irrefutable, authoritative, and divine.

The God-Given Power of the Holy Angels

This argument, contained in the first and second chapters of Hebrews, to prove Christ's superiority to angels, appears all the more convincing as we remember that the Hebrews stood in awe of the holy angels. They recognized their power, and considered them with reverence; for much of their Old Testament history had to do with the ministration of angels. Therefore, the very fact that Christ is superior to these mighty, holy creatures, established His deity; for only God is greater in power than the angels.

God had talked to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through angels. He had appeared as "the angel of the Lord" many times to His chosen people before He "became flesh and dwelt among us" in the Person of His Son. The Law of Moses was given through the medium of angels. And repeatedly, throughout Israel's history, her deliverance from peril of the enemy or plague or danger was brought about by the ministration of angels. Little wonder the Jews revered the holy angels; and, next to God Himself, attributed to them power and honor and holiness. Indeed, angelic creatures guarded the very holiness of Jehovah; for the cherubim of gold in the Holy of Holies suggested that the real cherubim kept sinful man out from the presence of a holy God, except on the basis of the atoning blood of the Lamb of Calvary who was to come. What an argument for the deity and holiness and power of the Son of God that He is "better than" these angelic beings!

Moreover, the redeemed Hebrews, to whom Paul was writing, knew that angels had attended the birth of the Christ-Child. They knew that the Lord Himself had promised that, when He returns in glory, He will be accompanied
by "all the holy angels." Heaven holds "an innumerable company of angels" (Heb. 12:22), "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (Rev. 5:11). And what are they saying, as they stand in the presence of the Christ of the Cross?

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:12).

The archangel Michael is there; Gabriel is there; yet even these powerful, holy creatures bow down in worship and reverence and praise before Jesus of Nazareth, the eternal Son of God and the sinless Saviour of the world! For Jesus is "better than" all the angels of heaven! The angels never allowed anyone to worship them; but the Son of God has ever accepted worship from the holy angels, as well as from redeemed children of men. And who is greater, the One worshipped or the worshippers? The argument is clear-cut and irrefutable.

Some years ago a popular radio minister and author, in New York City, preached and printed a sermon, entitled "The Perils of Worshipping Jesus." My friends, the title of that sermon is nothing short of blasphemy! It seeks to rob the Lord Jesus Christ of His eternal deity and glory. But thank God! We have in this first chapter of Hebrews what God, the Father, thinks of God, the Son; and He tells us here that His Son is worthy of our worship and adoration and praise. It is, indeed, perilous not to worship Him; for whoever rejects the shed blood of Calvary's Lamb as the only atonement for sin will be forever doomed in a lost eternity—without God and without hope. The whole Bible tells us that, in oft-repeated, unmistakable terms.

I am glad that this Epistle to the Hebrews has a message for us who are Gentiles also. For the God of Israel is the Saviour of the world. And already, even from our study thus far, our hearts should be singing with praise and joy to Him who is "better than" the angels of God, as well as "better than" the prophets who foretold His coming into the world to die, to rise again, to ascend into heaven, and to return in power and great glory—to be worshipped by every creature in His universe.

THE SON OF GOD—"SO MUCH BETTER THAN THE ANGELS" IN HIS BEING

Our King James Version of Heb. 1:4 translates the opening words of the verse as follows:

"... being made so much better than the angels ..."

Now according to the original Greek, the word "made" may be omitted; and the passage means, "Being so much better than the angels ..." In other words, the Lord Jesus was not "made"; He was never created; He always existed as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Nearly three hundred times in the New Testament the same Greek word used here is translated in some form of the verb "to be." Therefore, our text means that, in His Being, our Lord is "better than" the angels.

There are false systems of Christianity so-called which teach that, before Christ Jesus came into the world, He was a created angel. What is commonly known as "modernism" today—as old, however, as Satan himself, and not modern in any sense of the word—holds that Jesus of Nazareth was only a good Man, not eternal God. But these false teachings do not alter the truth that our Lord always was and ever shall be the everlasting God. And that is the thought expressed here in Heb. 1:4.

"A MORE EXCELLENT NAME"

Christ is "better than" the angels, because He "hath inherited a more excellent name than they" (Heb. 1:4). He is called the Son of God; angels are called God's ministers, His servants. Our Lord's name is "Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). His name " is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;
and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:9-11).

As if to prove the exceeding excellency of the name of Jesus, the Son of God, the Holy Spirit followed this statement of fact with the seven Old Testament quotations, to which we referred at the beginning of this lesson, the seven quotations which form the main portion of this first chapter of Hebrews. And in quoting them, the Spirit of God made very clear that He was recording a series of conversations that took place between God, the Father, and God, the Son, in the past eternity. Indeed, much of the book of Psalms contains the dialogue between the Father and the Son, enlarged upon and explained more fully in various portions of the New Testament. Again and again we read such words as these, “Unto the Son he saith”; and “Thou art my Son.” We read also of what God said to the angels. And never did the Father address the angels as He addressed His Son—as His co-equal in power and holiness and deity! What a holy conversation is recorded in the book of Psalms, repeatedly quoted in this Epistle to the Hebrews!

**THE SEVEN-FOLD PICTURE OF CHRIST’S SUPERIORITY TO ANGELS**

**FROM THE INCARNATION TO THE RETURN OF CHRIST IN GLORY**

Before we consider in some detail each of these seven Old Testament quotations, contrasting the Son of God with the angels, and recorded in Heb. 1:4-14, let us read the texts themselves, first as they were written in the Old Testament; then as they are quoted in the New. They present a marvelous portrait of the life of Jesus, the Son of God, from His incarnation even unto His coming glory, when He will return to earth “with all his holy angels,” to reign in righteousness and peace. Let us remember that we are quoting here from the Revised Version, the most accurate of English translations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Testament Passage</th>
<th>Quotation in Hebrews 1:5-13</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my son; This day have I begotten thee.&quot; —Psalm 2:7.</td>
<td>1. &quot;For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, This day have I begotten thee?&quot; Heb. 1:5a.</td>
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<tr>
<td>II Sam. 7:14.</td>
<td>2. &quot;... and again, I will be to him a Father, And he shall be to me a Son?&quot; Heb. 1:5b.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psalm 45:6, 7.</td>
<td>5. &quot;but of the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; A sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated wickedness: Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.&quot; Heb. 1:8, 9.</td>
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"... and again, I will be to him a Father, And he shall be to me a Son?" Heb. 1:5b.
Old Testament Passage

6. "Of old didst thou lay the foundation of the earth; And the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, And thy years shall have no end."
—Psalm 102:25-27.

7. "Jehovah saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, Until I make thine enemies thy footstool."
Psalm 110:1.

It is hardly necessary here to recall that the slight variation in the phraseology of the Old and New Testaments is due to the fact that the Old Testament was translated from the Hebrew into the English; the New Testament, from the Greek.

And what an array of Scriptures to prove the deity of the Lord Jesus! Away back in the past eternity the Father spoke to the Son, saying these and many other expressions of like nature concerning the Son's equality with the Father and with the Holy Spirit; concerning His omnipotence, His eternity, and His unspeakable love for His sinning creatures. Surely any Hebrew, seeking the truth about the Christ of Galilee, could not help being convinced that He was, indeed, the One of whom all the prophets had spoken! Surely no honest seeker after the truth of God could return to Judaism, after reading the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews with an open mind, after letting the Holy Spirit bear witness to the deity of Christ in these seven quotations from the Scriptures which every devout Jew accepted as the inspired Word of God! And surely no honest Gentile today could ignore this overwhelming proof of the deity of the Lord Jesus, and of His atoning work on Calvary's Cross—if only he would give the Holy Spirit a chance to speak to his heart; if only he would read this profound and searching chapter which opens the book of Hebrews!

And now let us go back over these seven quotations from the Old Testament, to examine in more detail their striking message:

1. _Jesus Is the "Only Begotten Son" of God, the Father._

   "Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, This day have I begotten thee?" (Heb. 1:5a).

   Never did the Father address the angels by the "more excellent name" of Son. The argument here is strong. Moreover, this passage from the second Psalm is quoted in at least two other places in the New Testament, always referring to Jesus, the Son of God. Paul quoted it in his sermon to the Jews in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia of Asia Minor; and again to the Hebrew Christians in Heb. 5:5.

   Now some people stumble over the word "begotten," saying that, if a person is begotten, then there must have been a time when he did not exist. Yet here we read three New Testament quotations of the Old Testament statement that Jesus is the Son of God, begotten of the Father. Then was there ever a time when the Father begat the Son? Yes, my dear friends. But was there ever a time when Christ did not exist? No; there was never such a time! How then could Jesus be the "only begotten Son" of the Father, and at the same time be co-equal and co-eternal with the Father? The passage from Paul's sermon to the Jews of Antioch in Pisidia gives us the answer; let us look at it:

   "... though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain ... But God raised him from the dead ... And we declare
unto you the glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” (Acts 13:28-33).

Then Paul went on to quote other Old Testament Proph­ecies that had been fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ. Therefore, it seems evident that here, at least, the reference is to the Father’s having begotten the Son in His resurrection.

Isaiah 9:6 tells us that “unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.” As the Christ-Child our Lord was “born” in Bethlehem; but as the eternal Son He was “given” to become our Saviour. God gave to the world His “only begotten Son”; that Son died, was buried, and lay in Joseph’s new tomb for three days and three nights. Then the Father, through “the Spirit of holiness,” raised Him from the dead; and in His resurrection the Son was “begotten” of the Father. (See Rom. 1:4.)

Granting all this, yet it is also true that Jesus of Nazareth was “conceived by the Holy Ghost”; so that, in His birth, as well as in His resurrection, our Lord was the “only begotten Son” of the Father in heaven. John uses the expression in the only reference he makes to the birth of Christ. He did not tell the story of the star and the manger, of the Wise men and the shepherds, because He was writing to prove that Jesus always was the eternal Son of God. But in the prologue to his Gospel narrative, John associates the birth of Christ with the expression, “the only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14). Again, in John 1:18, he writes,

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (i.e., made Him known).

We are all familiar with the much-loved John 3:16, which might well refer both to our Lord’s birth and to His resurrection; for He had to be born in human flesh, in order to die for sinners; and He had to rise again, in order to live forever, giving eternal life to all who would believe in His atoning work on the cross.

Once more the Apostle John uses the term, “the only begotten Son” of God, in I John 4:9:

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.”

Whether the expression refers to our Lord’s having been born into the world by the Holy Spirit, of the Virgin Mary; or whether it refers to His having been begotten from the dead, the fact still remains that He was, from all eternity, co-equal with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. All Scripture verifies this truth!

And this One who is the Creator of angels, this beloved Son of the Father, is “so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” When God wanted to speak finally and completely to a sinful world, He spoke not by angels, but “by His Son”! (See Heb. 1:2, 4.) Jesus is the “only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

We have seen from our Scripture reading that all but one of these seven quotations from the Old Testament, proving that Jesus, the Son of God, is “better than” the angels, is taken from the book of Psalms; and even that one, quoted from II Sam. 7:14, is very much like a similar statement in one of the Psalms. This fact reminds us of our Lord’s remark to the two disciples, as He walked with them to Emmaus on the evening of His resurrection day; and to the disciples in the evening on that same day. To the two on the way to Emmaus, He said:

“O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:25-27).

Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit; and “all the scriptures” include the book of Psalms. The New Testament had not been written when Christ spoke these words; therefore He was say-
ing to these two disciples that all the Old Testament was filled with prophecies concerning His coming to suffer and die, and then "to enter into his glory."

Later in the same day of His resurrection the risen Lord appeared to His disciples, at which time He said unto them similar words to those spoken on the way to Emmaus:

"These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44).

Without question, our Lord referred to the second Psalm, which is definitely Messianic, when He taught His disciples, both before and after His death and resurrection, from the Psalms "concerning himself." It is a remarkable prophecy—this second Psalm, from which Paul quoted the first chapter of Hebrews, saying,

"For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, This day have I begotten thee?"

We can not take time here to expound this second Psalm; but let us note, in passing, that the early disciples quoted it in their prayer for boldness, following the first persecution of the church, saying:

"O Lord . . . who by the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David thy servant, didst say, Why did the Gentiles rage, And the peoples imagine vain things? The kings of the earth set themselves in array, And the rulers were gathered together, Against the Lord, and against his Anointed: for of a truth in this city against thy holy Servant (or 'Child') Jesus, whom thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel foreordained to come to pass" (Acts 4:24-27, R. V.).

My friends, we could spend this entire lesson and more in proving that this second Psalm is a prophecy of the Messiah. But these two quotations which we have read from it today are more than enough to prove that the One of whom it spoke was the eternal Son of God. How can skeptics dare to deny that the Old Testament foretold His coming into the world, in order that we might believe in His name? The only answer to this question is that Satan has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts. Such minute prophecies, written a thousand years before Christ was born in Bethlehem, speak for themselves! But let us hurry on to the second quotation in this first chapter of Hebrews.

2. The Relationship between the Father and the Son Is Perfect.

". . . unto which of the angels said he at any time . . . I will be to him a Father, And he shall be to me a Son?" (Heb. 1:5).

Here is further proof of the argument presented in the first quotation, from the second Psalm. In our Scripture reading earlier in this lesson we saw that this quotation is taken from II Sam. 7:14. In that wonderful chapter the Holy Spirit tells us that David wanted to build a temple for the Lord; and that God promised him a son to sit upon his throne, even Solomon, who should build the beautiful temple in Jerusalem. In I Chron. 22:8 we are told that it was because David had been a man of war and had "shed blood abundantly" that he was not permitted to erect the temple for Jehovah. But there is more in the seventh chapter of II Samuel than God's promise concerning Solomon; there is the double reference, both to Solomon and to the "Greater than Solomon," even David's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jehovah was as "a father" to Solomon; but the very quotation of these words by the Holy Spirit, with their application to Jesus, the Son of God, definitely establishes the fact that the prophecy given to David had to do with the promised Redeemer and Messiah of Israel. How else can we account also for such words as these, taken from God's answer to David in the seventh chapter of II Samuel?
"I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever
... and thine house and thy kingdom shall be estab-
lished for ever before thee: thy throne shall be estab-
lished for ever" (II Sam. 7:13, 16).

Solomon's ivory throne, overlaid with gold, has long per-
ished; his riches have vanished away; his earthly glory is
gone. But not the glory of David's greater Son! "Of his
kingdom there shall be no end!"

"Of the increase of his government and peace there
shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon
his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judg-
ment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah
9:7).

Did not the Angel Gabriel tell the Virgin Mary this
same promise?

"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the
Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the
throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the
house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall
be no end" (Luke 1:32, 33).

Having established beyond controversy that the proph-
ecy quoted in Heb. 1:3b from II Sam. 7:14 foretold the
coming into the world of the eternal Son of God, the Holy
Spirit does not enlarge upon the subject. But what mem-
ories it calls to our minds! What a graphic picture we see,
concerning the perfect relationship between the Father in
heaven and the obedient Son of God upon earth, as we read
the words,

"I will be to him a Father,
And he shall be to me a Son!"

It was a beautiful relationship, unbroken fellowship,
from all the past eternity unbroken until, in His death
as our Sin-Bearer, He had to be forsaken by His Father, who
could not look upon sin! From all eternity there had been
perfect harmony between the Father and the Son. At His
baptism and at His transfiguration, the Father bore witness
to those who saw Him that Jesus was the "beloved Son," in
whom the Father was "well pleased." Our Lord Himself
could boldly say to those who hated Him,

"I do always those things that please him" (John
8:29).

The bitter cup of atoning for a world lost in sin and in-
quity marred that hitherto unbroken fellowship, during the
agony of Calvary's Cross; and that is why the sinless Son of
God "sweat as it were great drops of blood" in Gethsemane's
Garden (Luke 22:44). His holy soul shrank from becom-
ing a curse for us! And it is written,

"Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal.
3:15).

In the mysteries and depths of our Saviour's sufferings
we cannot fully enter. But how we should love Him for
bearing in His own body on the tree the curse and shame
and suffering that we deserve!

Yes; He walked in perfect harmony, in unbroken fel-
lowship, with His Father in heaven during His earthly min-
istry; and the prophecy of II Sam. 7:14 fully establishes
the fact that our Lord planned to become Man, in order
that He might die for us. The Holy Spirit verifies it in
Hebrew 1:5b.

The quotation from the Psalms that is very much like
this one from II Sam. 7:14 is found in Psalm 89:26,

"He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father,
My God, and the rock of my salvation."

As applied unto Christ, the word "salvation" could refer
only to His bodily resurrection from the dead; for He "knew
no sin!"

This eighty-ninth Psalm concerns the covenant which
God made with David (verses 3, 34, 35), with its promise of
a King to sit upon his throne forever (verses 4, 27, 29, 36).
Therefore, verse 26, setting forth the relationship between
the Father and the Son, definitely refers to the fellowship
between Christ on earth and His Father in heaven.
3. The Risen Lord Jesus Will Receive Worship from Angels at His Return to Earth in Glory.

The Holy Spirit, through the Apostle Paul, was adding proof upon proof that Christ Jesus, God's eternal Son, is "better than" angels when He quoted these words from the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, saying:

"And when he again bringeth in the firstborn into the world he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him" (Heb. 1:6).

For clearness and emphasis, let us compare this translation from the Revised Version with that of the Authorized, or King James Version:

"... when he bringeth in (or 'bringeth back') the firstbegotten into the world (or 'inhabited earth'), he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him."

Earlier in this lesson we saw that, in his sermon to the Jews in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, Paul implied that the Son of God was "begotten" of the Father in His resurrection from the dead. Here also the Holy Spirit tells us that, as the "firstbegotten" from the dead, "the firstfruits of them that slept" (I Cor. 15:20), the glorified Lord Jesus will once more return to this "inhabited earth." And when He does, the Father's voice of authority will bid "all the angels of God to worship him"—the beloved Son.

Our Lord Himself told His disciples as much, before He went to the cross; for more than once we read such words as these:

"... and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. 24:30, 31).

Now the Old Testament passage quoted in Heb. 1:6, is not found in our English Bible; but it is found in the Greek translation of the Old Testament which was used by our Lord upon earth. This is known as the Septuagint Version; that is, "The Version of the Seventy" godly Jews who are accredited with having translated it from the Hebrew into the Greek, which was spoken in their land in New Testament times. The double proof of the authenticity of this quotation is found in the fact that Christ Himself used this Greek translation of the Old Testament; and in that the Holy Spirit quoted the passage in Heb. 1:6. Neither Jesus nor the Holy Spirit could be mistaken!

It is an exceedingly strong argument that Paul uses here to prove that Christ is "better than" the angels; for surely the One worshipped is greater than those who worship Him! Never did the Father tell a man to worship an angel; on the contrary, the Lord often told His children, through the angels themselves, not to worship them, but to worship God. Yet here the Father expressly foretells that, when His Son returns to the earth in power and great glory, He Himself will say to all the angels, all the cherubim and seraphim, to the Archangel Michael and to Gabriel,

"Let all the angels of God worship him."

Do you see, my friend, how majestically the Holy Spirit portrays the portrait of the eternal Son of God, from His incarnation, even unto His coming again in glory, in these seven quotations from the Hebrew Old Testament, recorded in the first chapter of Hebrews? Here we listen to the Father's voice as He addressed the Son, in ages past, looking forward to His birth; His beautiful life on earth, in perfect fellowship with the Father; His obedience unto death; His resurrection; His exaltation; and His coming again in glory. Here we are "listening in," as it were, to the holy conversations held between Father and Son long before the Son was born into the world. And here we listen to the Father's command to the mighty angels who have never sinned, bidding them worship Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, buried, raised from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of the Father, there to wait till He takes His rightful throne! Such Scriptures as this put this song into our hearts:

"All hail the power of Jesus' name; Let angels prostrate fall;"
Bring forth the royal diadem,  
And crown Him Lord of all!"


"And of the angels he saith,  
Who maketh his angels winds,  
And his ministers a flame of fire" (Heb. 1:7).

By way of contrast between the eternal Son and the created angels, the Holy Spirit takes this passage from Psalm 104:4, to prove that the angels are God's messengers, His servants. How far beneath the exalted position of the Son, who is the Creator of angels and the One worshipped by angels!

Many people believe that the children of God will be angels in heaven; but there is not one verse of Scripture to verify such a belief. The angels are spirits, compared to the wind and a flame of fire. Swiftly, surely, they do God's bidding. They have the power to appear to man in human form, as Old Testament stories repeatedly bear witness. They are exceedingly numerous. They can see us, though unseen by us. They guard little children, and minister unto the redeemed throughout this life. They rejoice over "one sinner that repenteth." They receive the spirits of dying saints. They will come with Christ in glory, to gather Home His blood-bought children. They never are described in Scripture as many artists often portray them—in the semblance of children or beautiful women; always they are spoken of in the masculine, though they do not belong to the human race, and are not to be thought of as having sex. There is no marriage among the angels, for Jesus Himself said so. The word "angel" means "messenger." And it means exactly that; for the angels are God's messengers, His ministers, and the ministers of "the heirs of salvation," as we shall see from Heb. 1:14, in this lesson today.

(There is a comprehensive summary of the Bible teaching concerning angels in the footnote of chapter one of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the Scofield Reference Bible. For those who do not have this edition of the King James Version, we list here just a few of the Scripture passages referred to in the foregoing paragraph: Matt. 22:30; 26:53; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 5:11; Psalm 68:17; Psalm 91:11; Matt. 18:10; Heb. 1:14; I Cor. 4:9; Luke 16:22; 15:10; Matt. 25:31.)

No, my friend; your little child who is now with Christ; your loved one now in the glory—these are not angels. Nor will you ever be an angel. Traditions of men have handed down that story! Your little child and all your loved ones in heaven—all of God's redeemed church—are seated with Christ "in heavenly places," "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Eph. 2:6; Rom. 8:17).

Indeed, the angels are glorious and powerful and wonderful. It will be a marvelous sight for us to behold them—myriads of them—cherubim, seraphim, Michael, Gabriel; it will be beautiful and wonderful to see the holy angels of God! But theirs is created glory; our Lord is uncreated glory! And we shall "behold and share" that glory! Never did the Father address the angels as His "only begotten Son." Never did He say unto them or of them what He said to and concerning His Son,

"I will be to him a Father,  
And he shall be to me a Son."

5. The Son Is God and King!

... but of the Son he saith,  
Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever;  
And the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.  
Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity;  
Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee  
With the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Heb. 1:8, 9).

There are many false teachers in our Protestant churches today who say from the pulpit that Jesus never did claim to be God; that only Paul attributed to Him deity; that He was only a good Man; and that His shed blood does not atone for sin; that He did not rise bodily from the grave; and that He will not come again, bodily, visibly, to establish a literal kingdom upon earth. Yet here in the inspired Word of God we read that the Father addresses the Son as
“God,” the only Saviour, and the coming King! Nor was it Paul who first wrote these lines! It was the Holy Spirit, in the forty-fifth Psalm, who recorded these remarkable, irrefutable words. Then how do the skeptics explain such a passage? Many of them never refer to it in their preaching; and if they do, they ridicule it, denying that the Scriptures are inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. We cannot here go into the discussion of the proofs of divine inspiration; but, my friend, the proofs are very real, irrefutable proofs—proofs that have stood the test of the ages! Thank God for the faith He has given us to believe them!

The forty-fifth Psalm, from which this remarkable quotation is taken, is another beautiful Psalm of the Messiah. It is a prophecy of His coming as the King of Glory; and that prophecy will surely, literally be fulfilled one day. Let us turn to it for a moment, and glance at its message.

Verse 2 describes the King “in his beauty”:

“Thou art fairer than the children of men:
Grace is poured into thy lips:
Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.”

Verses 3-5 tell of the glory and might and majesty of the coming King. They tell of His truth and meekness and righteousness. They tell of swift and sure judgment upon all the hosts of evil—upon all who refuse to ascribe honor and glory and deity to Jesus, the Son of God, and the righteous King of Glory! Then follows the passage quoted in Heb. 1-8, the Father’s ascription of deity and righteousness and power to His beloved Son, even the Lord Jesus Christ!

But as we read on in this Messianic Psalm, we hear the prophet referring to the humble walk of the lowly Jesus upon earth; we read of how He left “the ivory palaces” of heaven, in order to suffer and die for us. We read of His bride, “the queen in gold of Ophir” (verse 9). The church is His blood-bought bride; He is the Heavenly Bridegroom. And when He comes again as King of kings, His bride will reign in glory with Him.

Possibly the Lord Jesus explained this Psalm to the two who walked with Him to Emmaus; we do not know. But it speaks to us of Him—of His uncreated glory, of His un-speakable love for us, and of His yet future kingdom, which is to be forever! The angels cannot compare in glory with the Son, whom the Father addresses here as “God,” whose throne is everlasting! He will rule in righteousness, for His sceptre is one of uprightness. When He was upon earth, as a Man, He “loved righteousness, and hated iniquity.” He loved the sinner, but He hated the sinner’s sin. Therefore, the Father anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Oil, in the Scripture, is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord was conceived by the Holy Spirit; baptized by the Holy Spirit; empowered by His own Holy Spirit for His mighty works and profound teachings; raised from the dead by the “Spirit of holiness.” He was, indeed, “anointed” by the Holy Spirit of God for the work which He came to do. And He has been exalted to the place of power and majesty and glory—far above all His “fellows,” His brethren, whom He came to save.

This is something of what the Father meant when He said to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, words that could never be spoken to angels,

“Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever!”

We need to remember that Christ is not occupying His own throne now; He is seated on “the right hand of the Majesty on high,” on the right hand of the Father. The throne of the Son of God is an earthly throne, “the throne of his father David.” God, the Father, is seated on the throne of the universe; Jesus, the Son, is on the Father’s right hand, waiting for His own throne, waiting until all His enemies shall become His footstool, as we shall see later in this lesson today.

The Lord Jesus is the “Lion of the tribe of Judah,” and Judah is the kingly tribe. Jesus’ throne is earthly; and He will not occupy it until He returns in glory. His throne is to be upon earth; He Himself is now in heaven. Why? Because nearly two thousand years ago wicked men said, “We
will not have this man to rule over us!” Then God reached
down from heaven to take His Son back to the glory. But
where did He find Him? He found Him in a grave, with
nail-prints in His hands and feet, with the spear-print in
His side. Wicked hands had crowned Him with thorns and
nailed Him to the tree! But God raised Him from the
dead, and exalted Him to His own right hand. The Lord
Jesus’ throne is empty now; for there is a throne without
its King, and a King without His throne. But it will not
always be so, thank God! "The righteous King shall sit upon
David’s throne, and Israel will be honored under Him—
"the head of the nations, and not the tail." We shall reign
with Him, as His bride. And the glory of the Lord "shall
cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea."

Today there is no “sceptre of righteousness” upon earth.
There is the iniquity of graft and cruelty and blood-shed
and torture! There is war—modern war, with all its hor­
rors! There is sin in the form of greed and selfishness and
blasphemy and defiance of God. Man is helpless before the
hosts of Satan—man who does not have the Lord Jesus for
his God and King. Our laws are passed by the scores; yet
they are soon broken, soon thrown into the rubbish heap.
But one day the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” will rule
“with a rod of iron.” He will put down all lawlessness and
sin by the word of His mouth. Then the holy Son of God,
who upon earth “loved righteousness, and hated iniquity,”
because He could not sin, that One will wield the “sceptre
of righteousness” as the “Prince of Peace.” Instead of sor­
rpw, there will be gladness.

“They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and
sighing shall flee away” (Isaiah 35:10).

6. The Son Is the Eternal Lord and Creator.

“Unto which of the angels said he at any time . . .
Thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the founda­
tion of the earth,
And the heavens are the works of thy hands:
They shall perish; but thou continuest:
And they all shall wax old as doth a garment;

And as a mantle shalt thou roll them up,
As a garment, and they shall be changed:
But thou art the same,
And thy years shall not fail” (Heb. 1:10-12).

Again the Holy Spirit quotes from one of the Messianic
Psalms; and but for the quotation, we might miss part of
the depths of meaning of this Hebrew poem; for the words
immediately preceding this passage in Psalm 102 become
wonderful, in the light of the Father’s message to the Son
in the passage before us. Let us turn to the Psalm, and
read verses 23, 24a; here we find the prophetic prayer of
our Lord, as He suffered in His sinless soul, in contempla­
tion of Calvary’s Cross:

“He weakened my strength in the way;
He shortened my days.
I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst
of my days.”

These may well have been the words of our Lord’s prayer
in the Garden of Gethsemane. As He faced the cross, He
knew that He was to be “cut off” “in the midst” of His
days, when He was a comparatively young Man, humanly
speaking. And as He prayed, He asked the Father, if it
were possible, to remove from Him the cup of suffering
and agony of bearing our sin and shame. We cannot enter
fully into this agony, for we are sinners saved by grace; He
knew no sin. But we know that the sorrow and suffering
were very, very great. Yet our Lord said unto the Father,

“Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt.
26:39).

This was the bitter experience which God foretold in
Psalm 102:23, 24a, when the Holy Spirit recorded the
prayer of the Son of God, uttered to His Father, centuries
before Christ was born in Bethlehem:

“He weakened my strength in the way;
He shortened my days.
I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst
of my days.”
The Father's answer to the Son's prayer is wonderful! It is the assurance recorded in Heb. 1:10-12 that Jesus, the Son of God, is Lord—eternal; that He is the Creator, whose "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). It is the reassuring promise of resurrection from the dead, spoken to Him who willingly offered Himself as the sinner's Substitute, bearing the penalty of the sinner's guilt. It is as if the Father would remind the Son of His eternity, of His deity, of His omnipotence! Not that the Son of God did not know all this; but, as a Man, He was subject to His Father's will, "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). And the Holy Spirit graciously recorded this holy conversation between the Father and the Son, applying it to Christ in Heb. 1:10-12, in order that we might know assuredly that Jesus of Nazareth was the eternal God, who planned even before the heavens and the earth were brought forth, to suffer and die for us. That is why the Holy Spirit wrote all the hundreds of prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the coming of the Saviour—to prove His deity! Such things were never written of a mere man! Such things were never written of the greatest of mere men, not even of a Shakespeare, or a George Washington, or a Lincoln! But they were written before they came to pass concerning Christ, that we might know that He was God. (Cf. John 13:19.)

As we examine closely the Father's response to the Son, in the passage before us, we note that He called the Son "Lord." Only God can be called by that name. It means "Jehovah," "the Self-existent One who reveals Himself." Again, the Father said that the Son is the Creator. The meek and lowly Jesus, who humbled Himself, in order to die for us, is the One who flung the planets into space; who made the oceans and the mountains and the vastness of this universe; who made all plant and animal life; who made man "in his own image" and "likeness." He is the One of whom we read in the opening chapters of Genesis—greater than the prophets, greater than the angels, greater than His own works!

He is greater than His universe; for, while the heavens and the earth shall pass away; while there shall be "a new heaven and a new earth"; yet to Him the Father said,

"Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail!"

These words remind us of Heb. 13:8,

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever!"

They remind us of the opening words of the Gospel According to John, of Paul's letter to the Colossians, where we read that "all things were made by him . . . things visible and invisible." Yes; Jesus was the Creator; He is Lord, eternal God!

My friend, you have often folded up an old garment and thrown it aside or put it in an incinerator. And one of these days the Lord Jesus is going to do that with this old earth. It will be purified by fire, and "be changed." Then He will bring in a "new heaven and a new earth," wherein dwelleth righteousness. Yet He Himself will continue unchanged, the glorified Lord Jesus. And, thank God! We who love Him will live forever in glory with Him! This morning, my Christian friend, you have a life that is more durable than the heavens and the earth. When the sun, moon, and stars shall have passed away, you will live with Christ throughout all the endless ages. Your life will outlast and outshine the brightest star in the universe of God. That is what is meant by God's gift of eternal life. And Paul, seeking to reassure the Hebrew Christians of the wonders of salvation in Christ, simply reminded them of the Father's own promise to His eternal Son.

"Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail!"

7. The Son Is the King-Priest—Seated at the Right Hand of the Father.

"But of which of the angels hath he said at any time, Sit thou on my right hand,
Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet?" (Heb. 1:13).

Again, the Holy Spirit quotes another Messianic Psalm, this first verse of which is applied in at least five other New Testament passages to the Lord Jesus, to prove His eternal deity. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all tell the story of how Christ quoted this verse in Psalm 110:1, and applied it to Himself. Of the unbelieving Pharisees, Christ asked,

“What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit (i. e., by the Holy Spirit) call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, nor durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions?” (Matt. 22:42-46; cf. Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44.)

The Pharisees could not answer Christ without admitting that David said, in Psalm 110:1, that David’s Son, even Jesus, was David’s Lord; and that they stubbornly refused to do. They knew that to acknowledge that Psalm 110:1 meant that God, the Father, said to God, the Son, “Sit thou on my right hand...” would be an acknowledgment of the deity of Christ; and they would not accept Him as their Lord and Messiah. Therefore “no man was able to answer him a word.” Indeed, “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (I Cor. 12:3). And the Pharisees, like the modernists so-called today, denied the deity of Christ, refused to let the Holy Spirit convict and convert their souls by accepting Jesus as the only Saviour and Lord.

Psalm 110:1 is applied to Jesus, our Lord, by Peter, as on the Day of Pentecost, he proved the resurrection of Christ from the Old Testament prophecies, adding also that God the Father had highly exalted His Son to His own right hand:

“For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou

on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool” (Acts 2:33-35).

And once again Paul quotes Psalm 110:1 in Heb. 10:12, 13, proving that, because our Lord has finished His redemptive work on the cross, “once for all,” He sat down—in striking contrast to the actions of Israel’s many priests who had to stand daily, offering oftentimes the same sacrifices which could never take away sin!

This Psalm 110 is also quoted several times in Hebrews, in connection with Christ’s High Priestly work, “after the order of Melchizedek.” We shall not enter upon that discussion just here; we mention it only to show what prominence is given this Messianic Psalm throughout the New Testament. Surely it must have been one of the Psalms the risen Lord used to teach the disciples on the road to Emmaus on that first resurrection day!

But the argument of the text in Heb. 1:13 is that the Father never did say to an angel,

“Sit thou on my right hand.”

That is the place of authority and power; the position of infinite and universal omnipotence! No angel in the heaven, no archangel ever created, no cherub that ever came from the hand of God, was ever invited to sit on the right hand of the Father. But the Saviour sits there, side by side with the Father, “at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

My friend, had you ever thought when it was that the Father invited the Son to sit upon His right hand? God loved the world, and sent His Son to die for lost man. Wicked men rejected His beloved Son; they mocked Him; they spit upon Him; they crucified Him. And all the years when, as the “Man of Sorrows,” He walked upon the earth, heaven must have missed Him; the Father and all the holy angels must have been looking forward to the day of His return to the Father’s House! He suffered; He died; He was buried. Then He arose in triumph over death and the grave. After forty days of showing Himself alive to those who loved Him, He ascended into heaven. And what a wel-
come He must have received! Then it was that the Father said unto Him,

“Sit thou on my right hand,
Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet.”

And there He sits today, not only waiting for all the world to be subject unto Him when He returns in glory; but waiting also to “make intercession” for those who believe in His finished work on the cross, waiting till the last soul shall be added to His body, which is His church. There He sits, our “Advocate with the Father,” our Mediator, our Priest. He has never lost a case in the court of heaven, nor will He! What a wonderful Saviour and Lord!

**THE ANGELS ARE THE MINISTERS OF “THE HEIRS OF SALVATION”**

As if to complete the contrast between the Son of God and the holy angels, in proving the deity of Christ, the Holy Spirit concludes the first chapter of Hebrews by saying,

“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”
(Heb. 1:14).

Earlier in this lesson we considered briefly the ministry of angels. We saw that our loved ones in glory are not angels. Nor will any child of God ever become an angel in heaven. We were not created angels. But let us never forget that the moment we were born again, God's holy angels took charge of us, guarding and protecting us for Jesus' sake. They are our ministers; we are the “heirs of salvation.” And, my friend, would you not rather by far be a son than a servant? I would not exchange places with the Archangel Michael! If he should say to me today, “I will give you my place in the presence of God,” I should not hesitate to say, “No; I want to remain a child of God, a son and heir, not a servant!”

If we should go to Buckingham Palace in London, we should see there many servants, dressed in beautiful garments, covered with gold braid. We should see rings on their fingers, ornaments on their clothes. But, after all, they are only butlers and ladies-in-waiting—servants. In that same palace are two little girls, daughters and heirs of the king. They are members of the royal family, far above the highest servant in position and honor.

Likewise, God's redeemed children, members of the bride of Christ, which is His church, are adopted into the family of God, far above the highest angel in position, united to Christ in His death, resurrection, and ascension into “heavenly places.”

You may have seen the picture of a little baby, near the edge of a precipice, reaching out to capture a butterfly, a guardian angel standing near to keep her from falling. My friend, there is Scripture for that! The Lord Jesus said,

“Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 18:10).

And many centuries ago the Psalmist wrote, saying,

“The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Psalm 34:7; cf. Psalm 91:9-12).

When a man puts his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, God appoints His holy angels to protect him. As I drove from Glendale to Los Angeles this morning, to minister over the radio and in the Church of the Open Door, God’s “ministering spirits” and mine kept me from harm. If you, this morning, as you have been listening to the Gospel message, have accepted Christ as your personal Saviour, my friend, you have protecting angels, appointed by the Lord, to take care of you, even until you are at home in heaven with Christ. The godly Dr. Stearns used to say that, when he went into the pulpit to preach, he was always conscious of two congregations—the redeemed children of God before him in the pews, and the holy angels who accompanied the redeemed. This is what the Holy Spirit meant when He proved that the Son of God is “better than” the angels, saying,
"Are they (angels) not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

Only a rebellious, stubborn heart could turn away from this first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews unconvinced of Jesus' deity; unconverted by His grace, unwilling to admit that He is "better than" all of God's holy angels. With the power born of simplicity, in the irrefutable statement of fact, the Divine Author proves His argument:

Christ is superior to angels because He has "a more excellent name"—that of Son; because He is the One worshipped by angels; because He is the Creator of angels; because He is God and King of the angels, who are spirit-beings and His servants; because He is the Ruler over angels, who are His subjects!

David once said, "The face of the Lord is ever before me," and David wrote at least seventy-two of the Psalms. The risen Lord taught His disciples from the Psalms "concerning himself." The theme of the Psalms, like that of all the Word of God, is the glory of our Lord's Person and the sufficiency of His work. And when we shall see Him "face to face," we shall "behold and share" His glory, described in the Psalms and quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews. We shall then join in the angel-chorus, which shall resound throughout the endless ages:

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:12).

My unsaved friend, put your trust in Jesus' blood as an atonement for your soul; then you, too, may join in this heavenly song of praise to the Lord and Creator of angels.

"Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way" (Psalm 2:12).