LESSON IV

The Danger of Neglecting the Gospel

Hebrews 2:1-4

"The Man Christ Jesus" Is "Better Than" the Angels

Hebrews 2:5-18

The first four verses of the second chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews record a parenthetical warning; the remainder of the chapter continues the argument of chapter one, and proves that "The Man Christ Jesus" is "better than" the angels. We must ever remember that, in the original Hebrew and Greek, the Old and New Testaments were not divided into chapters and verses. The students of John Wycliffe, about 1400 A. D., first divided the Scriptures into chapters; the verse divisions were made still later. We are grateful to the godly men who thus made it easy for us to use the Word of God. However, we need to bear in mind that they do not claim inspiration by the Holy Spirit; and sometimes their chapter divisions break into the continuity of thought in the Scriptures themselves.

Here, in the beginning of the Epistles to the Hebrews, we have an example of that fact; for both chapters one and two are devoted mainly to the argument that the Lord Jesus Christ is "better than" the prophets and "better than" the angels. Only the parenthetical warning of 2:1-4 varies from the central theme.

In our study of chapter one we saw that, as the eternal Son of God, Creator, Heir of all things, Revealer of God’s glory, the express Image of His Person, Upholder of all things, Saviour, and King-Priest, the Lord Jesus is "better than" the prophets and "better than" the angels who worship Him, their Creator and Lord. In our lesson today we shall see that, as the perfect Son of Man, He is also superior to all the holy angels. Therefore, as the God-Man, the Lord Jesus Christ is "better than" the angels.

It was Paul who called our Lord “the Man Christ Jesus"
and we use the term here advisedly, because in the second chapter of Hebrews the Holy Spirit is emphasizing Christ's perfect humanity; just as, in chapter one, He is emphasizing Christ's eternal deity. Like two foundation pillars of a magnificent edifice, these two established truths form the basis upon which the entire superstructure of the Epistle to the Hebrews rests. In other words, the "chief point" of the epistle, the High Priestly work of Christ, is developed upon the fundamental truths of our Lord's eternal deity and His perfect humanity; for as our Great High Priest, He had to be both God and Man. In order to be the sinless, omnipotent Priest, He had to be eternal God; and chapter one proves, beyond controversy, that the Son of God was ever the all-glorious Lord. But in order to die, as the vicarious Sin-Bearer; in order to become a Priest, offering His own shed blood as an atonement for the sinner's soul, the eternal God had to become Man. And chapter two presents conclusive testimony that Jesus of Nazareth was "God manifest in the flesh," "Immanuel, which being interpreted is God with us."

Indeed, we might well write over the main portion of chapter two the title, "God Was Manifest in the Flesh . . . for the Suffering of Death." For the emphasis is chiefly upon the reason why the Lord Jesus was made "one" with His "brethren," thus identifying Himself with His "children." It was in order that He might "lead many sons unto glory" that the God-Man, nearly two thousand years ago tasted "death for every man." He came to die! Moreover, "this same Jesus" will one day see "all things in subjection under him." He who is greater than the angels will then be acknowledged by angels, as well as by every creature in His universe, as King of kings and Lord of lords. Thus the argument is final and conclusive:

"For unto the angels hath he (the Father) not put in subjection the world to come (i.e., 'the inhabited earth'), of which we speak" (Heb. 2:5).

"The Man Christ Jesus," the sinless Son of Man, will be that Ruler over "the inhabited earth" when He comes in glory to reign. "Better than" the angels? Infinitely "better than" all His created beings! Did not our last lesson tell us that, when He returns to the "inhabited earth" in glory, all the angels of God will "worship him"? (See Heb. 1:6.) And chapter two tells us that He is now "crowned with glory and honor," just waiting for that coming day when "the inhabited earth" and every creature will be put "in subjection under him!! Then all His enemies will be His "footstool" (Heb. 1:13).

Before we consider in some detail the main argument of our lesson today, that "The Man Christ Jesus" is "better than" the angels, let us pause to study the parenthetical warning of the first four verses of chapter two. They may well form a lesson in themselves; yet we want to bear in mind that they form one of numerous parenthetical warnings to be found throughout this epistle, and are not a part of the main theme. Certainly they are important, or the Holy Spirit would not have included them. Moreover, they present unlimited possibilities for preaching the Gospel, for proving the eternal security of the believer in Christ, and for warning against neglect of our "great salvation," against apostasy and unbelief.

THE DANGER OF NEGLECTING THE GOSPEL

Hebrews 2:1-4

The Holy Spirit is faithful in warning against apostasy. In the case of the early Hebrew Christians, He was warning them, lest they return to Judaism. The temple of Jerusalem was still standing; the ritualism of the Mosaic Law was still maintained by the rulers of the nation who did not accept Christ as their Messiah. The persecution of these rulers against the disciples of the Lord Jesus was bitter and unrelenting. Then, too, many of the Jews had given intellectual assent to the Gospel of Christ; they were convinced that He was the Saviour and Lord; yet they had not accepted Him in their hearts and confessed Him before men. Hence this and other warnings found in the epistle.

The figure used by the Holy Spirit to illustrate the danger of neglecting a full confession of faith in Christ is that of a ship that is in danger of drifting past the harbor, into the
furious storm at sea; or past the landing place, swept on by the strong current of the river. Let us read verse one from the Revised Version:

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them."

What a safe harbor is our "great salvation"! What a refuge is our Lord! And what a strong current of persecution, what a storm of bitter hatred the early Hebrew Christians had to face! Likewise, the danger is still very grave today, both to Jew and to Gentile, the danger of neglecting the Gospel of the Son of God. We need ever to press home upon the hearts and consciences of men and women who listen to the message of salvation the consequences of rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of sinners. It is not enough to profess adherence to certain doctrines; it is not enough to be baptized and join a church. The sinner must "be born again" by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, by faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have been preaching the Gospel for about twenty-seven years; and during that ministry I have seen men under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit who yet refused to surrender their hearts to the Lord. I have watched them as they built up dikes and dams against the incoming tide of God's convicting power; yet as the months and years have passed, they have drifted away from those first impressions, going down to the end of life's pilgrimage without even a concern about their souls. It is a solemn thing to hear the Gospel preached; for every added ray of light means added responsibility. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things" of Christ, "lest haply we drift away from them."

The word "therefore" links this warning with the graphic portrait of Christ's eternal power and glory set forth in the opening chapter of Hebrews. If sinful man rejects, or drifts away from the intellectual conviction that Jesus is the Lord, without accepting Him as the only Saviour, then there is danger ahead, just as there is danger to the sailor who drifts past the harbor, or down the swift current to destruction.

Judiasm and Christianity Contrasted

Verses 2-4, which complete this parenthetical warning, present one of the many striking contrasts between Judaism and Christianity found in this epistle; for "the word spoken by angels" is the Law of Moses; the "great salvation" is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every disobedience to the Law of Moses was punished; and "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation" (R. V.) as that offered in the Gospel? The Law of Moses was "spoken by angels"; but our "great salvation" was first "spoken by the Lord," who is superior to angels! Moreover, the Gospel was confirmed by the apostles, who heard it directly from the Lord; and the preaching of the Gospel by the apostles was "witnessed" to by the Holy Spirit, who wrought miracles to prove the truth of the Gospel, and to give evidence of its power.

What a contrast! And what a warning!

Let us read this warning, set forth in verses 2-4; then let us outline the foregoing contrast, by way of summary, that it may forever be written upon our memories and upon our hearts:

"For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divine miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"

Judaism

Christianity

The Law of Moses "So great salvation"

"Spoken by angels" Confirmed by the apostles

Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19 "Witnessed" to by the Holy Spirit

"Disobedience . . . reward" "How shall we escape, if we (i.e., punishment) neglect so great salvation?"

Now let us quote from Acts 7:53 and Gal. 3:19, to see just what the Holy Spirit has said about the giving of the
Law of Moses at the hand of angels; we use here the Revised Version:

"... the law ... was ordained by angels" (Acts 7:53).
"... the law ... was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator" (Gal. 3:19).

Now the Law of Moses, miraculously given though it was, can not compare with the "great salvation" of the Son of God! Moreover, the Law was "spoken by angels"; the Gospel, "by the Lord" Himself! The Holy Spirit had just proved, in chapter one of Hebrews, that the Son is "better than" the angels. What more convincing warning could He have given to those who were being tempted to return to Judaism, even though they were intellectually convinced that Jesus was Israel's Messiah enlightened, but not regenerated?

Moreover, the word "spoken by angels" stood! Disobedience to the Law was punished, as every Jew knew, if he read his Old Testament. The man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath Day, in defiance of God's fourth commandment, was stoned at the express command of the Lord Himself, for the Law demanded perfect obedience. (See Num. 15:32-36.) Israel's repeated apostasies and gross idolatry were punished by captivity and sorrow and death.

"The word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward."

But some will ask, "Was the Law not very stern, in exacting the death of the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath Day?" Yes, my friend, the Law of God is holy, and it demands perfect obedience. But the Law is also just; and the God of grace, knowing that we could never keep His holy Law, came down to earth to obey it fully in our stead. Thus the Law was magnified; the sinner justified; and our holy God was both just and merciful. That is the wonderful message of the Gospel of the grace of God.

"By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). But thank God!

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13).

In view of all this, the Holy Spirit continues in Heb. 2:2, 3; saying, since he who disobeyed the Law of Moses was punished and the Law was given at the hand of angels; how much more shall he who is indifferent toward and neglectful of the Gospel of the Lord of angels receive due punishment and reward of disobedience!

Now the Lord "began" to speak the Gospel to His disciples when He foretold His death and resurrection, when He instituted the Lord's Supper, and gave the meaning of the emblems of His broken body and shed blood. He knew that His disciples did not understand all He had to tell them, but that they would understand when they were filled with the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, going out into the world to "confirm" His Gospel. That is why He said to them,

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye can not bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself ... He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:12-14).

Then, after the Holy Spirit did come upon the apostles and other Jewish believers in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), the apostles went out to teach and preach and heal, "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will" (Heb. 2:4).

THE PLACE OF MIRACLES IN THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

May we digress from the main argument of this passage for a few minutes to state why God does not usually work through miracles of healing in the church today? Many of His children are confused about this subject; and many are led into the depths of despair, thinking that, if they do not have faith for physical healing, they may not have faith
enough to be saved. I repeat, "God does not usually work through miracles of healing in the church today." I say, "not usually"; for missionaries in foreign fields do tell of great miracles of grace. But do the heathen nations not have something common with the heathen world in the days of Christ and the apostles? In the days of the early church, Christians did not have the complete New Testament; therefore, God used miracles to "confirm" the Word of the Lord Jesus, to convince men that Jesus was the Messiah and Saviour and Lord. Today we have the complete New Testament; we have the testimony of Christ and His apostles—to say nothing of the indwelling Holy Spirit, transformed lives, and the silent testimony of the history of Christianity since the days of the apostles! The need for miracles in the physical realm does not exist today, as the need did exist in the days when Christ was on earth and His apostles went about "preaching the Word."

Let me illustrate this truth by something I saw when conducting services in the Glide Memorial Church, in San Francisco. Opposite the hotel where I was staying a big building was being constructed. First an old structure had to be demolished; and I watched with interest as the big steam engines shovelled away the brick and tons of cement blocks. Morning after morning I watched, just after breakfast, as the workmen made rapid progress at their task. Then one morning I saw that they were laying the foundation. A huge pile driver took big logs and drove them into the ground. There was cement to be laid, too. With every stroke of the pile driver the foundation was made more secure, more firm. But one morning I noticed that the pile driver had been taken away. It was no longer needed; for the foundation had been laid. The pile driver was not needed for the erecting of the walls, or for the placing of windows. It had done its work, and had been removed.

As I watched the progress made in the erection of that great building in San Francisco, I thought of the building of "the household of faith," even the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. The foundation was laid when He shed His precious blood on Calvary's Cross. "No other foundation can any man lay" than that! Then He sent Peter and James and

John and all the apostles out to tell the story of saving grace. "The Jews require a sign" (I Cor. 1:22); for God had promised in their Old Testament that the blind should see, the lame walk, when their Messiah should come to earth; therefore, He kept His promise and performed many miracles of healing, both in the days of Christ on earth and in the days of His apostles. Then His written Word was finished; and men had its infallible testimony for a guide. Early in the Christian era the church was given the Holy Spirit, to teach and comfort and strengthen and sustain. What more could the church ask? And, like the pile driver, miracles in the physical realm were taken away; yet men went on building upon the one foundation, which is Christ Jesus.

Certainly God is still able to heal the sick. And He most assuredly does answer prayer for the sick. But the so-called "gift of healing" does not belong to this age. God is sovereign in the matter, and does not work today through individuals having this gift, as He did in apostolic days.

"So Great Salvation"

Before we leave this parenthetical warning, contained in Heb. 2:1-4, let us think briefly of why our salvation in Christ Jesus is "so great." Many sermons have been preached on this topic; books have been written upon it. We would take time here for only a passing thanksgiving for the greatness of our salvation in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

1. It Is Genuine. God does not make statements simply in order to fill the pages of His Book. But He calls the Gospel a "great salvation" because it is authentic, efficacious, and divine.

2. It Settles the Sin Question. Moreover, there is no other way of settling the sin question, for

". . . there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Daniel Webster was once asked what he considered the greatest question that ever confronted him, to which he replied, "The greatest question that ever entered my mind is my accountability to Almighty God." Never do we find
God making little of sin. He teaches throughout His Word that sin separates man from God, that sin is a terrible thing, and that there is only one remedy for sin. The whole theme of the Bible centers around the Saviour of sinners. One day John the Baptist, who had been preaching repentance from sin, saw Jesus approaching, and cried out, saying,

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

In those words of John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, we learn why our salvation is "so great." It settles the sin question—forever!

3. Its Author Is Great. "Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2) is the great and mighty God! Therefore, His salvation is great! We need not here repeat all that the Holy Spirit has been saying unto us, in the first chapter of Hebrews—to say nothing of the entire Bible—concerning the greatness of the Son of God. But we would ask the unsaved sinner who may be listening in to these broadcasts,

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

My unsaved friend, do not neglect it; do not reject it. The mighty God of eternity offers it as a free gift. Accept it, and learn something of His greatness and His love!

4. It is Free. The prophet of old called to the sinner, saying,

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1).

The hymn writer, likewise, expressed his praise for the free gift of God's grace when he wrote,

"Nothing in my hand I bring; Simply to Thy cross I cling."

Our "great salvation" is free, and it is sufficient for all who will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. It Makes the Believer Eternally Secure. We can not exhaust the reasons why our salvation is great; but let us close this brief meditation upon the "wideness of God's mercy" with this reassuring truth: It makes the believer eternally secure. As we continue these studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we shall find some of the passages most bitterly discussed on this very question; and without exception every one of these is a wonderful testimony of the Holy Spirit to the eternal security of the believer in Jesus Christ, our Lord. We shall take them in order, as we come to them in the text, finding that each one reminds us that, "once saved, always saved"; that "whosoever believeth" in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ "shall never perish." And when God says, "never perish"—not once or twice, but literally hundreds of times—He means exactly what He says!

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to this great salvation!" We ought to be out in the highways and byways, winning souls to Christ! What Los Angeles needs, what America needs, what the world needs is the Lord Jesus, the Saviour of sinners. What the church needs is not to "neglect" this "great salvation"—neglect it through lack of fellowship with Christ through prayer and the reading of His Word. The nations today need soul winners, men on fire for the Lord, to pluck sinners as brands from the burning. It is estimated that there are about 159 millions of people in Africa. Do we really care that most of them are lost? A missionary recently told us that possibly one hundred thousand of these had heard of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know that forty people out of every fifty people in Japan today have never heard the story of our "great salvation"? If we had been busy giving them the Gospel during the past centuries, surely we should have avoided this cruel war with Japan today. And what shall we say of the 400 millions in China, and of the millions in India and in the islands of the sea? Yes, and in Mexico, Central and South America? What shall we say of the millions in our own country and in other countries which have had the Gospel—millions who spurn or neglect our Lord and His "great salvation"?
"We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them" (Heb. 2:1).

The holy angels, who acknowledge their allegiance to their Creator and Lord, must marvel at our lethargy!

"THE MAN CHRIST JESUS" Is "BETTER THAN" THE ANGELS

Hebrews 2:5-18

As we observed at the beginning of this lesson for today, the Holy Spirit, following the parenthetical warning of Heb. 2:1-4, resumes the argument that our Lord is “better than” the angels. Therefore, let us remember that, with the exception of this brief parenthesis, all of Heb. 1:4—2:18 is a clear proof of the superiority of Christ over the angels whom He created, and who worship Him. Let us remember that the angels were held in high regard by the Hebrews; and that the Holy Spirit was seeking to lead His ancient people on from Judaism to a bold confession of faith in the Christ of the Cross, who is greater by far than the very best Judaism had to offer.

CHRIST—NOT ANGELS—WILL RULE OVER THE "INHABITED EARTH"

Now, having proved Christ’s eternal deity, the Spirit of God explained in Heb. 2:5-18 why the Son of God became also the Son of Man. He had to be "made flesh," in order that He might "taste death for every man." And He introduced this portion of the argument by the statement that the "Man Christ Jesus"—not angels—will rule over "the inhabited earth" at His return in glory:

"For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come (i.e., 'the inhabited earth'), whereof we speak" (Heb. 2:5, A. V.).

Two other references to the angels in this chapter follow up the line of argument. Briefly they are these: (1) That, in order to die, Christ became "for a little time" lower than the angels "for the suffering of death"; that is, He became Man; and (2) that when He came to redeem fallen humanity, He did not become an angel, but He became Man, of the "seed of Abraham." (See verses 2-9, 16.) What a store of hidden treasure lies in the exposition of these verses, 5-18! We shall try to see something of their beauty as we examine them, verse by verse.

But before we do, let us get a bird’s-eye-view of the four Old Testament quotations, with which the Holy Spirit proves His point—that the “Man Christ Jesus” is “better than” the angels. We remember that seven Old Testament quotations, in the first chapter of Hebrews, proved our Lord’s deity. And let us remember also that the Jews to whom this epistle was addressed believed in the Old Testament as inspired by God, authentic, and infallible. Therefore, the proof found on its pages, concerning Christ Jesus, was irrefutable. Again we quote from the Revised Version, the most accurate of English translations:

THE FOUR-FOLD PROPHETIC PICTURE OF CHRIST’S HUMANITY

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Testament Passage</th>
<th>Quotation in Hebrews 2:6-10, 12, 13</th>
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<td>1. &quot;When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him but a little lower than God (or the angels), Thou madest him a little lower than the angels (i.e., 'for a little while lower'); Thou crownedst him with glory and honor, And didst set him over the works of thy hands; Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet. But now we see not yet all things subjected unto him, he left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we see not yet all things subjected to him. But we behold him who hath been made ('for a little time') lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor,</td>
<td>1. &quot;What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels (i.e., 'for a little while lower'); Thou crownedst him with glory and honor, And didst set him over the works of thy hands; Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet. But now we see not yet all things subjected unto him, he left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we see not yet all things subjected to him. But we behold him who hath been made ('for a little time') lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor,</td>
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All sheep and oxen, 
Yea, and the beasts of the field, 
The birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, 
Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.” —Psalm 8:3-8.

2. “I will declare thy name unto my brethren: 
In the midst of the assembly will I praise thee.” —Psalm 22:22.


As we shall see from our study of these four quotations from the Old Testament, each one has a double reference: (1) The immediate or historical reference to man; and (2) the prophetic and major reference to Christ. Two of them are taken from the Messianic Psalms — prophecies of the coming Messiah; and two refer to experiences in the life of Isaiah, yet very definitely foretell our Lord’s incarnation and identification with His “brethren,” whom He also calls His “children,” even His blood-bought church. Each of these speaks to us of His perfect humanity. We shall consider them in some detail in their order.

MAN’S DOMINION IN EDEN LOST THROUGH SIN

The “one” who “testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?” was David. And the “certain place” where he “testified” these things is the eighth Psalm. (Cf. Heb. 2:6.) As the Holy Spirit was addressing Hebrews, who were familiar with the Old Testament, He did not need to explain who wrote this Psalm or where it would be found. In its Messianic character, this eighth Psalm is wonderful. But before we consider it as a definite prophecy of the coming of Christ into the world to redeem sinners, let us look at it in its reference to the race of human beings.

David grew up as a shepherd boy. He spent many nights out under the stars, tending his sheep. Doubtless, like many another in every age, he gazed into the heavens and was awed by the majesty and beauty of God’s vast universe. Little wonder he exclaimed, as he scanned the starry expanse,

“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?”

Like many another, he must have seemed to himself as a tiny speck in the wide expanse of God’s universe. Yet, as he penned the inspired lines of the eighth Psalm, he considered also the “glory and honour” which God gave to man before he fell through sin. Possibly his thoughts went back to the scene in the Garden of Eden, before sin entered to mar God’s perfect creation. Made “in the image of God,” man verily had “dominion over the works of God’s hands” over “all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.” And David wrote of all this in the eighth Psalm. Whether he knew he was foretelling the coming into the world of the Messiah of Israel and Saviour of the world, we do not know; certainly David was saved by faith in His coming to die for sinners! And certainly he was guided by the Holy Spirit when he wrote this beautiful Psalm.

Whatever he understood concerning its deeper meaning, he had every reason to know of man’s loss when sin entered the world, bringing with it the loss of complete dominion over the works of God’s hands. In Eden Adam could speak to the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea, the animals of the earth; and they obeyed him. But now the birds fly away at man’s approach; the fish seek to elude his bait; the animals avoid his snares. Why? Because man lost his complete dominion over God’s earth when he sinned. It is true that, in a measure, he still has dominion over the animal kingdom; in a sense he rules; but what confusion he has brought! What chaos! What sin!
"Now we see not yet all things put under him" 
(Heb. 2:8).

God created man in His own image; and man lost that likeness through sin. God made man the lord of the earth; and man lost that dominion through sin. We hear foolish men talking about the dignity and the glory of the human race; but, my friend, man has lost his true dignity, his glory which God gave to him in Eden. He has nothing to boast about now, except a Saviour, given by the grace of God, when he linked Himself with the human race at His incarnation.

Moreover, the “Man Christ Jesus” will one day see all things put in subjection to Him. Even when He was upon earth, in humiliation and sorrow, all nature obeyed His will. He sent Peter to take a coin from the mouth of the fish. He told Peter to “launch out into the deep, and let down his nets,” and “a great multitude of fishes” were taken at His spoken word. He bade the winds and the waves be still, and they obeyed His voice. He walked upon the water. He cursed the barren fig tree and it withered away. If, in His humiliation, He thus “manifested forth his glory,” what will it be when verily “all things” are “put in subjection under His feet”!

JESUS—FOR A LITTLE TIME “LOWER THAN THE ANGELS FOR THE SUFFERING OF DEATH”

But the eighth Psalm is also definitely Messianic. Our Lord Himself quoted the second verse concerning Himself (Matt. 21:16); and the Holy Spirit, in the second chapter of Hebrews, explained that the Lord Jesus is the One of whom the prophet spoke. David certainly was thinking of his Lord when he wrote the opening and closing verses of this Hebrew poem, which reads like a refrain:

“O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens.”

“We see not yet all things put under him. But we see

[18]

Jesus, who was made (for a little time) lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb. 2:8, 9).

What a commentary on the eighth Psalm! What a salvation is described in these words! When man sinned, and lost all through sin, the eternal God and Lord of angels humbled Himself to become, “for a little time,” that is, for thirty-three and one-half years, “lower than the angels,” in order to die for man. He “was made flesh” for “the suffering of death.” And having “made peace through the blood of his cross,” He has been exalted to the right hand of the Father, “crowned with glory and honour.” Moreover, it was “by the grace of God” that He came and suffered and died for a disobedient race of mankind; it was all of grace.

My dear friends, is that not wonderful? The Creator of angels left His lofty height, and came down to die; then the Father highly exalted Him to His eternal glory, which He had with the Father “before the world was.” Man has failed utterly; “but we see Jesus,” the Saviour! He offers hope to the human race. It is a dark picture that sin has wrought; “but we see Jesus,” “the Man Christ Jesus,” exalted to the place of supreme power, there to intercede for redeemed man. He came down, “for a little time” “lower than the angels for the suffering of death,” that He might “lead many sons unto glory,” to behold and to share His glory, to reign with Him when verily all things will be in subjection unto Him.

As we look out upon the world of sin today, as we read the papers and hear the radio news of war and carnage and torture and hate, we shudder at the outlook for a sin-weary, war-torn world — but for the grace of God. Then, as we look up, “we see Jesus” in all His uncreated glory; and we see Him there—the God-Man, the Redeemer, the earth’s rightful King, who will one day rule and have dominion over “the inhabited earth,” a trust not committed to the highest angel. The “outlook” is sorry, indeed; but the “uplook” is filled with hope.

It is our Lord’s humanity that the apostle is emphasizing here, because the only way by which the human race could
be lifted from the mire of sin was for the Lord Jesus to become a Man and link Himself with the human race. "Jesus" is one of His earthly names, and means "Saviour." And as our Saviour, He came into the sin-cursed world to die, that in His death, resurrection, and ascension He might lift us to the place where the Father has exalted Him. Do you know, my friend, that the supreme Person in the universe is a Man, "the Man Christ Jesus"? Not an angel, not an archangel, not the cherubim or the seraphim, but Jesus, the Son of Man, is very God, higher and superior to all His holy angels.

The angels do not die. God cannot die. But, in order to die, God became Man, "lower than the angels" during His earthly pilgrimage, only "for a little time." He had said to Adam in the Garden of Eden that, if he ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would "surely die." Man did eat that fruit, and man brought sin and death into the world. Only the God-Man could take the sting out of death, and pay the penalty of sin. That, my friend, is what the Holy Spirit had in mind when He wrote the eighth Psalm, quoting it later and applying it to Christ Jesus, our Lord.

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33).

Of course, every born-again soul who knows his Bible understands that our Lord, in tasting "death for every man," put salvation within the reach of every man; this passage does not mean that every man will accept it and be saved. Only those who "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," and accept His free gift of grace, only those will behold and share His glory. This truth is plainly and repeatedly set forth in all the body of revealed truth.

**Jesus—Our Sin-Bearer "by the Grace of God"

"We see Jesus, who was made (for a little time) lower than the angels for the suffering of death... that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him..." (Heb. 2:9, 10).

"It became him" to bear our sins in His own body on the tree because He is the God of grace. It was like Him to love us enough to die in our stead, because He is the merciful and loving Lord. He is holy and righteous; and as the just and holy God, He had to exact the penalty of death. "The wages of sin is death," and that wage had to be paid. But because He is merciful, as well as holy, He took the sinner's place; He became the Sin-Bearer. His grace, my friend, that led Him to Calvary is higher than the heavens and deeper than the sea.

Redemption of lost man was a work which no angel could do. Only the God-Man could "taste death for every man." Only He could grapple with man's last enemy, death; for He is the Lord of life. Had you ever thought of the fact that this world is a vast graveyard? Where are the billions of people who have lived upon the earth before our own generation? It is estimated that there are some two billions of people in the world today; and hundreds of generations have preceded our own. If the Lord tarries, the seventeen hundred million living today will soon pass off the earthly scene, and another generation will take their places. Where are all these who have gone? Their bodies are beneath the sod. They have died, died, died! For death is man's enemy.

But "by the grace of God" our Lord Jesus robbed death of its power for all who will believe in His atoning, vicarious death on the cross. He came, not to be a great teacher, an eager reformer, a benevolent philanthropist, a perfect example. False cults tell us that He was all of these, yet not a Saviour. Rationalism denies His atoning work which He came to do. But these false religions are Satan's tools. Our Lord Jesus had one work to do; and that was to "taste death for every man," to be our Sin-Bearer "by the grace of God." Of course, He was the greatest of teachers; He was kind and sinless and true. He was all of these because He was the holy God. But He came to die for sinners. That is grace.

The false religions deny His deity and His atoning work on the cross. Russellism teaches that He was an exalted angel before He came into the world, even the Archangel Michael. Such a statement is gross blasphemy, for angels are created beings; whereas our Lord is the Creator, eternal.
Christian Science says that there is no sin; therefore, no need of a Saviour; that Jesus was the Way-Shower—whatever that is! Unitarianism and modernism deny His eternal deity; yet their adherents stand in Protestant pulpits throughout our land today. We might go on to show that the false cults and the false religious systems seek to rob the Lord Jesus Christ of His deity and His atoning work of grace. Yet the Word of God, in hundreds of ways, repeats the sacred story, that our Lord Jesus was always the eternal God of glory.

So it is here in the passage before us,

“For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things...” (Heb. 2:10).

How carefully the Holy Spirit guards His deity! He is the Heir of all things, “for whom are all things”; and He is the Creator, “by whom are all things.” Let us never lose sight of the fact that the lowly “Man of sorrows,” who had nowhere to lay His head, became Man for a little time “for the suffering of death” because He is the God of all grace.

My friend, if you can understand Calvary, if you can understand the heart of God and the mystery of the cross, then you will know what grace is. Sometimes we try to define “grace.” We say that it is “unmerited favor,” “un-deserved mercy.” But not until we get into glory shall we know more of the meaning of the grace of God. Even after we shall have been there a million years, we shall not fully know the length and the breadth and the height and the depth of God’s grace. Paul tells us in Ephesians that, “in the ages to come,” God is going to show “the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7).

I have often told you of Robert Murray McCheyne, that great Scotch minister of the Gospel. He died when he was about twenty-nine years of age; he has been with the Lord for about one hundred years; yet his name is just as fragrant in Scotland today as it was when he ministered to her people. One day Robert Murray McCheyne was meditating upon this word “grace.” And as he thought upon it, he wrote a hymn of six or seven stanzas, the first of which goes as follows:

“When I stand before Thy throne, Dressed in beauty not my own; When I see Thee as Thou art, Love Thee with unsinning heart; Then, dear Lord, shall I fully know— Not till then—how much I owe.”

When you and I get to heaven, and ask the Lord why He looked down in pity to save us from drunkenness and thievery and murder and hatred and greed; why He took our place on the cross to die as our Sin-Bearer, then we shall know something of what His answer will mean, spoken in the one word, “grace.” I can not explain grace; I can preach it. But when I see the Saviour “face to face,” I shall understand better what the Holy Spirit meant when He wrote that “it became him” to “taste death” for me “by the grace of God.”

Jesus, Our Lord—Bringing “Many Sons Unto Glory”

The cross of Jesus was God’s way of bringing “many sons unto glory.” He who was the Creator of angels, took a place “for a little time” “lower than the angels,” that He might redeem and lead with Him “many sons unto glory,” to a place higher than that of angels. His redeemed are “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17); and that position is higher than that of the highest angel. The angels are our ministers, God’s ministering spirits, serving on our behalf; in the glory we who are the bride of Christ will share His glory. That is why Christ died.

Before the incarnation of the Lord Jesus, the Father had only one Son. But He wanted “many sons” in the glory; therefore, He gave His “only begotten Son,” a love-gift to the world, that this Son might identify Himself with humanity, die for lost men, and lead “many sons unto glory.” Now God has one “only begotten Son” and many “sons of God,” redeemed by His shed blood.

“As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12).

When He was upon earth, our Lord Himself said,
"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24).

When Christ uttered those words, He was talking about His approaching death; and that law of God was just as true of His Son as it is even today in the world of nature. That which abides by itself remains by itself. The Father loved the Son infinitely; but if the Son had not died, the Second Person of the Trinity could never have led "many sons unto glory."

Not long ago I was talking to a farmer who placed in my hands an ear of corn. He had counted the kernels, and told me how many there were. Then I thought of the one kernel that had been put into the ground, in order to make that ear of corn possible. And I thought also of the Lord, who "tasted death for every man," that He might "lead many sons unto glory." I thought of the millions and millions of the redeemed who will behold and share His glory throughout the endless ages, because He was willing to "die." And I realized anew that no angel could have redeemed us; that our Lord became a Man, not an angel, "for the suffering of death." And I remembered the added truth, spoken by our Lord following that profound statement concerning the "corn of wheat," a truth which vitally concerns us in our Christian testimony before a godless world:

"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour" (John 12:25, 26).

Had you ever thought, my friend, that the grains of corn which grow on the full ear are just like the one which went into the ground and died? And that is just another illustration of the Scripture truth that "the sons of God" shall "be like him" in the glory.

"For our citizenship (R. V.) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:20, 21).

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2).

We shall be like our glorified Lord Jesus when He raises His saints from the dead. Those who die believing in Him go immediately into His presence; and "to depart, and to be with Christ . . . is far better" (Phil. 1:23). The spirits of believers in Jesus who have died are with the Lord; but theirs are unclothed spirits; their bodies are in the grave. Paul has been in heaven for nearly two thousand years, but he does not yet have his resurrection body. The saints shall be like Christ when the dead are raised and the living changed, at His coming for His bride, the church. Then body, soul, and spirit, we shall "be like him." And it was in order to accomplish this glorious union between Christ and His church that the Son of God came down, "for a little time" "lower than the angels," that He might "lead many sons unto glory," to a position higher than the angels who have never sinned. That is grace!

JESUS, THE LEADER OF OUR SALVATION—MADE "PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERINGS"

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain (or 'leader') of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10).

The Revised Version translates the word "captain" here as "author," as also in Heb. 12:2. And the margin of the Scofield Reference Bible explains that it means "the leader, or originator; i. e., one who initiates and carries through." The literal rendering is "Prince-Leader." It has been illustrated by the Indian file leader, who blazes the way and leads his men into battle, leading them on to deliverance from the enemy. Just as David killed Goliath with the giant's own sword, so our Lord met and conquered Satan, our enemy,
with Satan's mightiest weapon, even death. He explored every avenue of the grave, and came out triumphant. That is why He could say to the aged John,

"Fear not . . . I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hades (R. V.) and of death" (Rev. 1:18).

And He is the Leader of our salvation, who will assuredly "lead many sons unto glory"—body, soul, and spirit!

The word "perfect" in the New Testament can always be translated "complete." And this is the sense in which it is applied to the Lord here. In His Being, He was always morally perfect, the sinless, holy God. And when He died upon the cross, He was the Lamb of God "without blemish and without spot." On earth He always did those things which pleased His Father in Heaven, as the Father Himself twice testified. Not even His enemies could find fault with Him. And in His death He could be our Substitute only because He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7:26).

But it was through suffering—"the suffering of death"—that the Lord Jesus was perfected or made a complete Saviour. To be a perfect Saviour He had to die. There was no other way, by which He could redeem those sons, whom He wanted to lead "unto glory."

On the mount of transfiguration, He was "the Man Christ Jesus." His face did shine like the sun; His garments were white as the snow; His uncreated glory shone from within His very Being. He could have gone back to heaven then, as the God-Man. But if He had done that, He could not have been made a perfect Saviour "through suffering." Moses and Elijah were there with Him upon the mount. They had been in heaven for centuries, on the merit of His promised atonement; and Luke is careful to tell us that His "decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" was the topic of their conversation (Luke 9:31). What a conversation that must have been! They were talking about the cross! And on that cross our Lord, the Leader and Author of our salvation, became the perfect Saviour of sinners.

"We See Jesus"—"Crowned with Glory and Honor"

The crowns of Christ are very significant. When He went to the cross, He was crowned with thorns. In His death He bore the very symbol of the curse, for there were no thorns in Eden. And in His death He purchased the redemption of all nature—plant and animal kingdoms—as well as of fallen man.

"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. 8:22).

But "there shall be no more curse" when our Lord's purchased possession is "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21).

By faith we now "see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honor," no longer crowned with thorns, no longer "despised and rejected of men," but seated on the "right hand of the Majesty on high." We see Him by faith, interceding for His blood-bought children, caring for His own. We see Him restored to the eternal glory which He had with the Father "before the world was." We see Him, "the Man Christ Jesus," very God and perfect Man, our Mediator, our "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

And when He comes in glory to reign, He will be crowned with "many crowns," recognized by every creature in His universe as "King of kings and Lord of lords." (See Rev. 19:12, 16.) "This same Jesus" who tasted death for every man will reign in righteousness and peace, "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Psalm 72:8).

By the crowns of Christ we recognize Him as our Prophet, Priest, and King. Once crowned with thorns He came to reveal the heart of God, to die for our sins. "Crowned with glory and honour," He ever lives to intercede for us. And coming again, wearing upon His head "many crowns," He shall be our glorious King. "What a wonderful Saviour!"
THE IDENTIFICATION OF CHRIST WITH HIS BRETHREN—A PROOF OF HIS PERFECT HUMANITY

Across all of Heb. 2:5-18 might be written the word "identification," signifying Christ's identification with man, whom He came to redeem. And in a very definite sense verses 11-13 put this fact into words. Verse 11 states plainly that our Lord identified Himself with His "brethren," while verses 12, 13 quote the three remaining Old Testament passages found in this chapter and already referred to in this lesson. As we have seen, these Old Testament passages prove that, centuries before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the Holy Spirit had foretold the coming of Israel's Messiah, to be born into the world as God-incarnate. In other words, the Holy Spirit is emphasizing in these three verses the chief argument of this chapter, saying that He who is "better than" the angels is perfect Man; for His identification of Himself with His "brethren" is proof of His humanity. Let us read these verses just here, using the Revised Version; we might also summarize them by the following topics:

1. "The Man Christ Jesus" Is Not Ashamed to Call His Redeemed "Brethren."

"For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying,
I will declare thy name unto my brethren,
In the midst of the congregation will I sing thy praise"
(verses 11, 12).

2. As a Man, He Prayed to His Father in Heaven.

"... he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying...
... I will put my trust in him" (verses 11-13).

3. As the Son of Man, He Received from the Father His "Children."

"... he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying...
Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me"
(verses 11-13).

Now having taken an outline view of these three verses, let us go back to examine each one in some detail, following the same topics which we have given them:

1. "The Man Christ Jesus" Is Not Ashamed to Call His Redeemed "Brethren." Of course, "he that sanctifieth" is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. And "they that are being sanctified," as the literal Greek expresses it, are the born-again children of God. And our Lord's identification of Himself with us, His redeemed children, is stated in the words, "For both he that sanctifieth and they that are (being) sanctified are all of one (i. e., of God): for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." What a wonderful truth these words express! They tell us of the mystical union of Christ and His church! And to prove to the Hebrew Christians that this union was in the mind of God, long before the incarnation of our Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit reaches back into the Psalms and to the Prophet Isaiah to illustrate and establish His argument.

Now "sanctification," according to the Scriptures, means separation from sin, setting apart unto God, by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. It does not mean sinless perfection in this life for the redeemed sinner; it does mean the separating of the child of God from the things of this godless world unto the things of Christ, by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit of God. That is the marvelous thing about this age of grace, that those who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ are linked through the baptism of the Holy Spirit to Christ Himself; the Head of the body, which is His church. Individual Christians are members of His body; He is the Head, as Paul makes plain in his epistles to the churches.

My friend, you and I can understand this figure used by the Spirit of God, because we know how the members of our physical bodies are linked together, and how they are controlled by the head. This union of fingers, hands, arms, feet with every other member and with the head is brought about by creation. Likewise, the union of the members of the body of Christ with Him who is the Head is brought about by re-creation. "Ye must be born again,"
our Lord said to Nicodemus; and by these words he meant just this: the mystical union of Christ with His church on the basis of His cross.

Having identified Himself with His blood-bought people, He "is not ashamed to call them brethren." The Lord and Creator of angels is not ashamed to look down upon us, in all of our weakness and frailty, and call us His "brethren"! I do trust, my dear friends, that we may never be ashamed of Him! When we hear His name used in vain, God forbid that we should fail to bear witness to the majesty and glory of that name! God forbid that our lips should be sealed when we ought to bear testimony before men, angels, and demons to His saving grace!

This mystical union of Christ and His church was beautifully foreshadowed in the golden candlestick of the Holy Place in the Jewish tabernacle. You will recall that it was made from one talent of pure gold, valued at about $29,085. It consisted of one central branch, from which were beaten out six branches - all from the one piece of gold. Ever precious in itself, that piece of gold could not foreshadow the union between Christ and His church until it was beaten into a thing of beauty; and beating is the emblem of sorrow and suffering. Only through the sufferings of Christ, who was "smitten of God and afflicted" for our sins, only by His sufferings and death could we become one with Him, members of His body, of which He is the Head.

This mystical union between Christ and His church was unknown in Old Testament times; was first revealed to the Apostle Paul, that through the baptism of the Holy Spirit we should become members of His body; His bride, of which He is the heavenly Bridegroom. It is a marvelous privilege to live in this age of grace, when the members of our Lord's body become "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ!"

Only His grace could keep Him from being ashamed to call us His "brethren." Surely we are conscious of that fact every day, as we examine our sinful hearts. Yet the risen Lord said to Mary Magdalene,

"Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto..." (John 20:17).

Now we are not told anywhere in the Scriptures that we may call our Lord our "Elder Brother." Some well-meaning Christians use that expression, but it is not in the Bible. We are to call Him "Lord." Have you ever noticed that only those who loved Him while He was upon earth could address Him as "Lord"? Judas Iscariot, at the last supper, could call Him only "Master," but never did he speak to Him as "Lord." Why? Paul gives us the answer in I Cor. 12:3,

"No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

Judas was not born again. He could not say, "Lord," to Him whom he did not love. Likewise, the cults today speak of Christ as "Master," or the great "Example," or even "Jesus." Modernism usually refers to Him as "Jesus" or "The Nazarene," or with one of His names of humiliation. "Jesus" is a beautiful name; it is the Greek form for "Joshua," and means "Saviour." But "Jesus" alone does not speak forth His eternal majesty and deity and glory. On the contrary, how often Paul calls Him "the Lord Jesus Christ," or "our Lord Jesus Christ," or some such title which ascribes to Him His authority and power as the God-Man!

If you or I should enter Buckingham Palace and address the king of England as "George," we should certainly be reprimanded by the king's subjects. We should promptly be admonished to address him as "His Majesty King George VI." How much more needful it is to ascribe to our Lord His divine titles!

Now the twenty-second Psalm, which the Holy Spirit quotes in Heb. 2:12 to prove that the Jewish Old Testament foretold His incarnation, is another wonderful Messianic Psalm. We can not take time just here to study it fully, but let us look at a few of the familiar prophecies it sets forth concerning our Lord's death and resurrection. Indeed, the first twenty-one verses foretell His suffering and cruci-
fixion; the last ten, His resurrection power and glory. And let us remember that David, the human author, lived a thousand years before Christ, long before crucifixion was known as a means of execution. The Jews stoned their people to death; the Romans instituted crucifixion. Thus we see here a remarkable token of the Holy Spirit's inspiration of the Scriptures. Otherwise, how could David have portrayed so graphically the method of our Lord's death, a thousand years before Christ was born in Bethlehem, even before crucifixion was instituted?

As we read the first portion of this twenty-second Psalm, we hear the forsaken cry of our Lord from Calvary,

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

We hear the mocking utterances of the scornful mob who stood by His cross, bidding Him save Himself if He wanted to prove that He was the Son of God. We read of His bones as being "out of joint" not "broken"! We are reminded of the extreme thirst, the nail-pierced hands and feet; the casting of lots for His garments. What a picture! It is enough to break the sinner's heart!

But from this scene, the Prophet David, guided by the Spirit of God, beheld another picture, the glorious vision of the risen Lord Jesus, saying to his Father in heaven,

"I will declare thy name unto my brethren:
In the midst of the assembly will I praise thee" (Psalm 22:22, R. V.).

And that is the verse which Paul quotes in Heb. 2:12. As we read on to the end of this Messianic Psalm, we hear David singing of the risen, reigning King:

"All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto Jehovah;
And all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.
For the kingdom is Jehovah's;
And he is the ruler over the nations" (Psalm 22:27, 28, R. V.).

When the Holy Spirit, through Paul, told the Hebrew Christians that the risen Lord was pictured in Psalm 22:22, He was proving to them that their own sacred Scriptures, which they accepted as divinely inspired, foretold His perfect humanity, His identification with His "brethren," at which time He would declare unto them His Father's "name," singing the Father's praise "in the midst of the church." This prophecy foretold His words to Mary Magdalene on the morning of His resurrection, when He sent her to tell His "brethren" of His Father and their Father, of His God and their God. Again, it reminds us of His promise, spoken before He went to the cross,

"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).

And yet again it recalls to our awe-inspired minds and hearts the scene which John saw on the Isle of Patmos, the risen and glorified Lord Jesus, standing "in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks," which "are the seven churches" (Rev. 1:13, 20). What an incentive to persecuted Hebrew Christians to go on with Christ Jesus, the Lord—since He cared enough for them to call them "brethren," since He cared enough to be ever present with them, singing with them His praise to the Father in heaven! Indeed, He Himself is "the Chief Chorister," as one has aptly expressed it, leading His blood-bought "brethren" in singing praise to the Father! How much more wonderful, more powerful, more awe-inspiring is His presence than that of the highest angel in heaven! Dear, suffering Christian, whatever your sorrow, the Lord of Glory is "in the midst" of His own; He is with you to give "songs in the night."

2. "As a Man, He Prayed to His Father in Heaven."

Again, the Holy Spirit quoted the Jewish Old Testament to prove our Lord's perfect humanity, saying,

"I will put my trust in him" (Heb. 2:13a; cf. Isaiah 8:17).

When He identified Himself with His "brethren," our Lord prayed to His Father in heaven, being subject to His will. Many nights He must have spent in prayer. Before every important step in His earthly life, He prayed—as He was
baptized, before He called His disciples, as He was transfigured, before He went to the cross—these are just a few of the countless times our Lord Jesus prayed. As a Man, He prayed; and in the second chapter of Hebrews the Holy Spirit is proving that "the Man Christ Jesus" is "better than" the angels; hence this and other proofs of His perfect humanity.

3. As the Son of Man, He Received from the Father His "Children."

"Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me" Heb. 2:13b; cf. Isaiah 8:18).

The passage in Isaiah, from which this quotation is taken, is of very significant. It has a double reference: the immediate and historical reference to Isaiah and his sons; the major and final reference, to Christ, as Heb. 2:13b plainly states. Let us turn to the seventh and eighth chapters of Isaiah, to read of the prophet's two sons. One was called "Shear-jashub," meaning "a remnant shall return." The other was named by the Lord Himself, "Maher-shalal-hash-baz," which means, "Haste ye, haste ye to the spoil." (See Isaiah 7:3; 8:1-3.) Now Isaiah wrote saying,

"Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion" (Isaiah 8:18).

For what "signs" were these sons given to Isaiah? The meaning of their names tells us the answer to this question; and, as we have often seen, the Hebrew names had special significance. The footnote of the Scofield Reference Bible tells us what these "signs" were; we quote it here:

"The primary application here is to the two sons of Isaiah, Maher-shalal-hash-baz—'haste ye, haste ye to the spoil,' a 'sign' of the coming judgment of the captivity of Judah; Shear-jashub—'a remnant shall return,' a 'sign' of the return of a remnant of Judah at the end of the seventy years (Jer. 25:11, 12; Dan. 9:2). The larger and final reference is to our Lord (Heb. 2:13, 14)."

In other words, the very meaning of the names of Isaiah's two sons foretold the captivity of Judah and the return of the faithful remnant under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. God thus warned His people and encouraged them concerning what the future held for them in those Old Testament days. Isaiah's sons were for "signs." Their very names were prophetic of the then future history of Judah.

That the Holy Spirit foresaw in this utterance of Isaiah another prophecy concerning our Lord, is clear from the statement He makes in the second chapter of Hebrews; for there He tells the Jewish Christians and Christians of all this church age that this prophecy foretold the coming of the Lord of Glory to identify Himself with His "children," to become one with them, as the perfect "Man Christ Jesus." It is His humanity that we must ever keep before us in this second chapter of Hebrews.

We see also in these remarkable words, as applied to our Lord by the Holy Spirit of God, another beautiful and heart-searching lesson: the Father gave us the Son, and to Him we are precious! As we look into our own sinful hearts, we marvel at the grace of God, that He could love us, that we should be precious unto Him. Yet, as we read our Lord's intercessory prayer, recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, we hear His own reassuring words, spoken to His Father shortly before He went to the cross:

"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me" (John 17:6).

"Seven times our Lord speaks of believers as given to Him by the Father" in this beautiful prayer; and as if to reassure us that we living today are included in this petition, He said plainly,

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word" (John 17:20).

I wonder, my Christian friend, if you and I are "for signs" before a godless world—living witnesses to His matchless grace. Isaiah's sons were "for signs and won-
ders in Israel from the Lord of hosts." Their very names were prophetic. Are we bearing testimony to God's grace, telling the world why He identified Himself with His blood-bought "children"? He is "not ashamed to call" us His "brethren." As His "children," we are the "Father's love-gift" to the Son. How can we help but love Him and join with Him in singing praise to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God?

CHRIST—OUR REDEEMER FROM BONDAGE TO SATAN, FEAR, AND DEATH

If we should write a complete topic over Heb. 2:14, 15, we might express it in some such words as these: "The Son of God Was Made Flesh That He Might Redeem His Children from Bondage to Satan, Fear, and Death." And yet we are not to think of these two verses as separate and apart from those which precede or from those that follow. Indeed, they are the logical expression of the reason why the eternal God became Man, thus identifying Himself with His "brethren," whom He also calls His "children." Let us read them together:

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil: and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Here again we read the central theme of this chapter—why the Son of God became Man, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," delivering the redeemed of God from the fear of Satan and his mightiest weapon, death. In order to accomplish this deliverance, the eternal God had to become Man. And because His "children" are "partakers of flesh and blood," He "partook" (R.V.) of the same; that is, He "was made flesh." He did not become an angel; He became one with us, the perfect Son of Man.

The word "destroy" here does not mean "annihilate." It is rendered "bring to naught" in the Revised Version; and means, literally, "to render powerless." Russellism and other false systems teach that the wicked are going to be destroyed, or annihilated; but the Bible teaches no such doctrine. Here, for example, we read that Christ, in His death and resurrection, brought Satan's power to naught for all who will accept His redemption; therefore, death holds no fear for the child of God. But you and I and all Christians know that Satan is very real and very much alive; he is not annihilated. What our Lord did for us by His cross was to annul Satan's power over us, to bring it to naught, to take away our fear of death by giving us, instead, eternal life through the resurrection hope.

Let me ask you, my Christian friend, has Satan the power to impose death upon you? Assuredly not! When God's time comes to take you to heaven, what you will pass through—if the Lord tarries—is not death; it is "to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better" (Phil. 1:23). When the wicked, the unbelieving, die, they face the great white throne, the lake of fire, eternal darkness. That is the meaning of death in the Word of God. When those who go out of this life without believing in the Lord Jesus Christ shall stand before the great white throne, they will have to answer for every sin they have committed, every secret thing they have sought to hide from their neighbors, every wicked thought and word and deed. That is what we should have to face, but for the grace of God. When our Lord died on the cross, He "bore our sins in his own body on the tree." He paid the penalty of our iniquities; and by faith in our Substitute, we stand acquitted before the court of heaven. And when our souls pass out of this life, they go to be "with Christ." Insofar as our bodies are concerned, God just puts us to sleep, to await the resurrection of the saints. Just as a mother takes her tired little child and puts him to sleep, so God puts our bodies to sleep for a time, and takes our souls home to heaven, there to await the day when the dead shall be raised, when soul and body shall be reunited, forever to be like Christ. That is what our Lord accomplished in His death and resurrection, when He rendered powerless Satan's weapon of death, brought into the world through sin.
Therefore, He wants us to be delivered from all fear of death, all bondage to Satan and his wiles.

Until the Lord Jesus Christ died, Satan did have the power of death. That is why the Old Testament saints, when they passed away, did not go immediately to heaven. Read Luke 16:19-31, and you will see that the place of departed spirits, called “Sheol” in the Hebrew; “Hades,” in the Greek, had two compartments: “torment” and “Abraham’s bosom,” also called “Paradise.” Between the two there was “a great gulf fixed.” Those Old Testament saints in Paradise were in a state of bliss and peace; but they were waiting for Christ’s resurrection and ascension into heaven before they could be taken up to the very throne of God. Those in the place of “torment” were conscious of dire suffering. From the time of Adam, the spirits of all the dead were in one of those two realms—the place of departed spirits; their bodies, of course, were and still are in the grave.

Then on the cross our Lord said to the repentant thief, “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). Christ’s body lay in Joseph’s new tomb for three days and three nights; His spirit went to Paradise, “in the heart of the earth” (Matt. 12:40); called also “the lower parts of the earth” in Eph. 4:9.

Then Christ arose, His spirit joined to His resurrection body in fulfillment of the prophet’s assurance, when He foretold what the Son of God said to His Father,

“For thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol (or ‘Hades’);
Neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption” (Psalm 16:10).

Both Peter and Paul quoted this passage, declaring that it foretold the resurrection of Christ. (See Acts 2:25-31; 13:35-37.) And when our Lord ascended up to heaven, another prophecy was fulfilled, which foretold His taking with Him all the waiting spirits of the Old Testament saints as He led a “multitude of captives captive.” (See Psalm 68:18; Eph. 4:8-11.) From that day to this, Paradise has been, and ever will be, identical with heaven. To be “absent from the body” is to be “present with the Lord” (II Cor. 5:8).

Now we have gone into some detail concerning this important Scripture truth because many Christians are confused about it. We need to know its clear message, in order to understand why the Old Testament saints were, to some degree, under the power of death. Not until our Lord’s death was Satan’s power nullified, although let it be remembered that all who believed in His coming to die were saved, as it were, on a credit, by faith in His coming cross, just as we are saved who live on this side of Calvary. They went to Paradise, a place of comfort and bliss; but they were waiting for the veil of the temple to be rent in twain before they could enter into the very presence of God, even into the Holy of Holies.

Moreover, the Old Testament saints did not have the full teaching that is ours in the New Testament concerning the life to come. That is why they did not look with gladness toward the end of this earthly pilgrimage. When Hezekiah was told by Isaiah that he was about to die, he wept and prayed for an extension of life; whereupon God added another fifteen years to his life on earth. Likewise, in a sense, all the Old Testament saints were in fear of death, “subject to bondage.” But the Christian, living on this side of the cross, need have no fear of death; for “our Saviour Jesus Christ ... hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (II Tim. 1:10). And that is what the Holy Spirit is telling us in Heb. 2:14, 15.

Do you know, my Christian friend, that it is dishonoring to God for us to be afraid to die? Yet many Christians are afraid of death. Just this morning a Christian woman called me over the phone, following our discussion on this subject yesterday, and told me that she was afraid to die, yet trusting in Christ for her salvation. I told her the experience of my godly mother. All her life she too was in fear of death. Then when she came to the end of her earthly pilgrimage, she asked, “Doctor, is this death, this thing I have feared all my life?” In reply, the physician said, “Yes, Mrs. Talbot, I think it is”; whereupon my
mother said, "Well, is it not strange that the thing I have feared all my life holds no fear for me now?" And she went out of this world, repeating the words, "Absent from the body ... present with the Lord ... In my Father's house are many mansions."

Let us not be unbelieving, but thankful that, when we leave this life, the angels come to take our spirits to heaven (Luke 16:22); that we are just "going Home," forever to be with the Lord. He puts our bodies to sleep, to await the resurrection morning. And He holds the keys of "Hades and of death" (Rev. 1:18).

John Wesley was once asked to state briefly the doctrine he taught; and in reply he simply said, "Our people die happy!" The Christian martyrs have borne testimony to the joy of going to be with Christ. Stephen's face looked like "the face of an angel." Many early in the Christian era were burned at the stake; others were forced to fight with gladiators; yet others were thrown to lions. Yet they faced torture and certain death with songs of praise upon their lips and in their hearts. And what is their secret? Simply the message of Heb. 2:14, 15, that our Lord Jesus grappled with death, nullified the power of Satan who wielded the weapon of death, and conquered death and the grave. That is why the Christian can and should sing,

"Oh death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 15:55-57).

IN His INCARNATION CHRIST BECAME A MAN— NOT AN ANGEL

In order to rob Satan and death of their power, the Lord Jesus did not become an angel; He became a Man, even as Heb. 2:16 concludes the logical reasoning of this portion of the chapter, saying,

"For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham."

The Revised Version makes the thought even more clear,

"For verily not to angels doth he give help, but he giveth help to the seed of Abraham."

The meaning is plain: Christ Jesus did not come to earth to redeem the fallen angels; therefore, He did not become an angel. He came to redeem "the seed of Abraham," and that is why He became a Man—in order to die. The verb used here means, literally, "to help by taking one by the hand."

Peter and Jude tell us a little about the doom of the fallen angels, saying,

"God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (II Peter 2:4; cf. Jude 6).

That is all a great mystery to us; for God has not seen fit to reveal more concerning these sinful creatures. But God does tell us here in Heb. 2:16 that our Lord did not come to "give help" to the fallen angels. He came to bring salvation to "Abraham's seed." He came as a Man to redeem fallen humanity.

As the Holy Spirit was writing to Hebrews, He naturally referred to believers as "the seed of Abraham." Indeed, Christ did come to fulfill the covenants He made with Abraham; He came as a Jew, an Israelite, to redeem His "brethren according to the flesh." And looking beyond the covenants with the fathers of Israel, He included us Gentiles also in His sacrificial work. Of this blessed truth we read in Rom. 4:9-25 that Paul tells us that Abraham is "the father of all them that believe" in the Lord Jesus Christ. Likewise, in Gal. 3:14 we read one of many such assurances from God's Word:

"... that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit, through faith."

Therefore, "whosoever" believeth in Him shall be saved. It is sad but true that the children of Israel have been hated, neglected, persecuted; and all too often by many
who call themselves Christian. Our Lord was a Jew. He will come again as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," to take "the throne of David." How we should love the Jew! God's Word was written by Jews as they were guided by the Holy Spirit. God forbid that we should despise or shun or neglect the Jew! We owe an unspeakable debt to God's chosen people Israel!

GOD BECAME MAN, "THAT HE MIGHT BE A MERCIFUL AND FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST"

"Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation (i.e., 'propitiation,' R. V.) for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:17, 18).

In these closing words of chapter two we find the very first reference in the epistle to the "chief point" of the whole treatise; that is, Christ Jesus is our Great High Priest. Thus far the Holy Spirit has been laying the foundation for the discussion of this central theme of the book. In order to do so, He has proved that Jesus of Nazareth is both eternal God and perfect Man, "better than" the prophets and "better than" the angels. Now, as a kind of climax to the introduction, recorded in chapters one and two, He states the theme, saying that the eternal God was made "like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God." He states also a two-fold ministry of "such an high priest": (1) "To make propitiation for the sins of the people"; and (2) "to succor them that are tempted." This, as we shall see in the later development of this central theme, formed the chief work of the high priest in Israel—offering sacrifices for sins and dealing gently with his erring people, praying for them, strengthening them, succoring them in time of need. The Lord Jesus Christ came to fulfill all the Old Testament shadows and types. He offered one Sacrifice, "once for all," when He shed His own precious blood; He prays for His own at the throne of grace; He deals gently, sympathetically, patiently with His redeemed "children." He is the Great High Priest, far "better than" any earthly priest in Israel!

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus" (R. V.).

But then the divine Author pauses once again for a long parenthesis, covering chapters two and three, exhorting, warning, encouraging, at the same time proving that Christ is "better than" Moses and Joshua, who were among the very greatest of Israel's leaders in times past. Then the Holy Spirit closes this parenthetical section with the second reference to the High Priestly work of Christ, one of the most wonderful passages in all the epistle (4:14-16). It, too, forms a sort of climax to this second division of the introduction to the book. Then in 5:1—10:18 we find the "chief point" fully developed; yet it, too, contains one of the most searching of parenthetical warnings, recorded in 5:11—6:20. Thus we are continually reminded of the Holy Spirit's faithfulness in warning the Hebrew Christians not to return to Judaism, but to "go on with Christ" in the "better things" of Christianity.

But to return to the closing verses of chapter two, we need not dwell at length upon them here. They simply confirm the message of all of the chapter, that our Lord was identified with His "brethren" in order that He might be their merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God; in order to die for their sins, offering one sufficient Sacrifice upon Calvary's Cross; and in order to "succour them that are tempted" during the pilgrim journey from the cross to heaven itself.

Let us bear in mind that the Greek word for "reconciliation" is, rather, "propitiation." It means "atonement," or "expiation" of sin. The sinner is reconciled to God; not God to the sinner. God has made "propitiation," a covering for
our sins through the death of His cross. That is what this passage means. And in dying for our sins, our Lord became our Great High Priest. No other sacrifice was sufficient; only His shed blood could wash away the guilty stain of defilement, and make us "whiter than snow."

And how "faithful and merciful" He is! Israel's priests were not faithful. Even Aaron made a golden calf! Often Israel's priests were neither faithful nor merciful. But Jesus, our Great High Priest, is both faithful and merciful in things pertaining to God. How few Christians are either faithful or merciful! Let a fellow-believer fall into sin, and there are those who are quick to publish the fact. Many who stand in pulpits are faithless, denying the Lord Jesus and His atoning work and bodily resurrection. But our Lord Jesus is ever faithful, even when we are faithless, "He abideth faithful." His mercy is as great as His faithfulness; otherwise, we should not be able to stand before Him. And He is occupied with eternal things, "things pertaining to God."

My Christian friend, do not fret if your Great High Priest has not seen fit to bless you with temporal things. He has given you the whole universe, if you will but wait for it. He has made you an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ.

Not only is He faithful and merciful, but He is also able to succor them that are tempted. What a combination—faithfulness, mercy, omnipotence! Because He "was made flesh," He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows our loneliness, our sorrow, our poverty, our discouragement. He knows these things from experience; for He had nowhere to lay His head; His own familiar friend lifted up his heel against Him; He was the Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He knows our need; and He is able to succor and strengthen and sustain. If He permits testings and trials, perhaps it is that we may say, with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." Perhaps it is that we may learn to know Him better and "the fellowship of his sufferings." Perhaps it is that we may be able to comfort others with the comfort wherewith we ourselves have been comforted of God. Perhaps it is to teach us to long for heaven and His abiding Presence, setting our affections upon things above. Perhaps it is that we may, like Job, be an object lesson before the world in patience and faith, even through bitter sorrow. Whatever His reason, He is faithful and merciful and just. Moreover, He is able to succor!

No wonder the Holy Spirit said, in the very next lines,

"Consider Jesus!" "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus!"

As we remember that in the original there were no chapter divisions, we realize that there is no break in thought between chapters two and three. The natural conclusion to such an awe-inspiring, soul-satisfying presentation of the Person and work of our Lord, as that set forth in chapters one and two, could hardly be other than such an admonition, "Consider Jesus!" Think about Him, His faithfulness, His mercy, His omnipotence, His eternity, His love! Have you spent time today in meditation upon His perfections and glory, my Christian friend? "Consider Jesus," and your heart will be satisfied!

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus; Look full in His wonderful face: And the things of earth will grow strangely dim In the light of His glory and grace."