

## **Better things in Hebrews Hebrews chapter 1: Christ better than the fathers and the angels**

*[Please note : sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.  
New King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Today, we start a new series of Truth for Today talks titled "Better things in Hebrews." We will begin by looking at Hebrews chapter 1 under the heading of: Christ better than the fathers and the angels.

The Epistle of Hebrews is about the supremacy of Christ.

### **Verse 1: God speaking in the past**

"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets."

Hebrews is the only book in the Bible which begins simply "God." It goes on to embrace within one verse all God's communications in the Old Testament through the fathers, men like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the prophets such as Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. The "time past" covers the passage of time from Genesis to Malachi. From Genesis onwards, God spoke through these witnesses of Himself as the only God who created all things and of His dealings with people and nations, particularly Israel, throughout history. He spoke directly to and through chosen servants. Some were kings like David, and others were ordinary working men like Amos. Their words were inspired by the Spirit of God and delivered audibly, in writing and in the events of their lives in dreams, visions, and experiences. God also foretold in the same ways of the coming of the Saviour of the world, His Son, Jesus Christ.

*In the New Testament the risen Saviour unfolded the Scriptures to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, "And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself"; and later to His disciples in Jerusalem, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.' And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27, 44-45).*

### **Verse 2: God speaks in His Son**

"Has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds [aeons]."

Verse 2 flows on from the first verse to explain that all the fathers and prophets looked forward to were fulfilled in Christ. Following 400 years of silence, John the Baptist emerges as "a voice in the wilderness."

"For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying:  
"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight'" (Matthew 3:3).

He proclaims the coming Christ, And when Jesus appears, John the Baptist baptises the Saviour. As he comes out of the waters of baptism in Jordan, the voice that is heard is not that of the fathers, or of the prophets, the last of whom was John the Baptist, and not of angels. The voice that was heard was the voice of God the Father, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). God the Father announces His Son.

John begins his Gospel:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:1-3).

His declaration is in complete accord with the opening of the Epistles to the Hebrews. Jesus is the Word. God's perfect and final revelation, and the creator and heir of all things. Yet appearing in all the lowliness and grace of His manhood. God's revelation was no longer via chosen people on Earth but in the Person of His Eternal Son from heaven.

**Verse 3: Christ's brightness, image, power, redemption and majesty**

"Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

As the Saviour moved towards the cross, we learn uniquely in John's Gospel about His love and care for His small group of disciples and the countless number of people He would redeem. His final hours with His disciples are prefaced at the beginning of John 13,

"Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end" (v.1).

This is followed by the Saviour taking the place of the lowest servant to wash the disciple's feet to illustrate His service of love.

At the beginning of John 14, the Lord tells His disciples not to be troubled.

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there, you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know" (verses 1-4).

These words prompted Thomas to ask, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" (v.5) This, in turn, brought the unforgettable response of Jesus:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him"" (vv. 6-7).

Philip then asks, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us" (v.8). You can sense the disappointment in the heart of Christ as he answers Philip's question in John 14:9-11,

"Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves."

These vital verses demonstrate how Christ's brightness, image, and power had been seen. They were not seen in the angelic, fearful display of brightness experienced by the shepherds at Bethlehem when Christ was born. But in the mystery of Christ's incarnation, God became man, and the Son of God who was laid in a manger.

When Christ stilled the storm, it was after falling asleep in the exhaustion of His labours. Despite their closeness to Christ, the disciples did not understand Christ's brightness, image and power. This did not happen until Christ suffered, bled and died, rose again, and ascended into heaven, and the Holy Spirit descended and indwelt them. Then they understood His glory, and all their experiences fitted perfectly into place. Then John could write,

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (1:18).

Christ revealed the heart of God through His grace and truth. The disciples had looked for a glorious Messiah for Israel, not for the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world or the Good Shepherd who would powerfully lay down His life for the sheep. Yet, at Calvary, we see His brightness in the darkest place. In the face marred more than any man's we see, "It is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). There, we discover the power of the love of God.

[Christ's greatness is outlined in the Gospels.](#)

[He was greater than Abraham](#)

[Jesus was asked in John chapter 8,](#)

["Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?" \(v.53\).](#)

[He replies,](#)

["Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad. Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and](#)

You have seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM""(vv.56-58).

### **He was greater than Jacob**

"Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?"... The woman said to Him [Jesus], 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When He comes, He will tell us all things.' Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am He'" (John 4:12, 25-26).

### **He was greater than Moses and Elijah**

"Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'—not knowing what he said.

While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!' When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen" (Luke 9:28-36).

### **He was greater than David**

"While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, 'What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?' They said to Him, 'The Son of David.' He said to them, 'How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool?"' If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?' And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore" (Matthew 22: 41-46).

### **He was greater than Solomon**

"The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here" (Matthew 12:42).

### **He was greater than Jonah**

"The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here" (Matthew 12:41).

## He was greater than John the Baptist

“John answered them, saying, “I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.” These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me’” (John 1:26-30).

Christ's greatness was demonstrated in grace and truth. Only three disciples, Peter, James and John, witnessed His intrinsic majesty on the Mount of Transfiguration. As an old man, Peter writes of his experience,

"For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain" (2 Peter 1:16-18).

### Verse: 4 The Son is so much better than the angels

“Having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”

Christ's supremacy was something which the Fathers and the Prophets foretold in time. Angels knew His supremacy in eternity. They served the Godhead in heaven, and when Christ came to earth, they continued to serve and honour Him. The Archangel Gabriel appears first in the Book of Daniel, in the Old Testament. He describes himself as the one who "stands in the presence of God." He is sent by God to announce to Zacharias that he would have a son, John the Baptist. Later, he was sent to Mary to announce the birth of Jesus (Luke 1:19,11-20,26-28). When Christ is born unseen, homeless and laid in a manger, it is an angel who announces the news to the lowly shepherds with those words wondrous words,

"Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:10-12).

It was a multitude of the heavenly host who praised God,

"Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (v.14)

Angels ministered to Jesus at the end of His testing confrontation with Satan in the wilderness (Matthew 4:11). Angels strengthened Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:43). Angels announced Christ's resurrection (Luke 24:4-7) and were present at His ascension (Acts 1:9-11) But when Peter tried to defend the Saviour in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Lord told Peter to put away his sword and said, "Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53). The Lord caused the

officers sent to arrest Him to fall backwards when He identified Himself (John 18:4-8). The Lord did not need Peter or any of the disciples or twelve legions of angels to defend him as He prepared in power to lay down His life. The work of redemption was entirely His own. Neither disciples nor angels had any part in it. Unlike Peter, the angels understood this. These remarkable supernatural beings were created not to be worshipped but to worship and serve.

The Lord dismissed Satan at the end of His testing in the wilderness in Matthew 4:10.

"Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

But, as always, people have found reasons to worship idols on earth and angels in heaven. Paul highlights the practice of worshipping angels in Colossians 2,

"Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head" (vv.18-19).

Only fallen angels, like Satan, desire to be worshipped. All others joyously worship and serve the Godhead. Hebrews teaches us about the supremacy of the Son of God to combat false teaching and magnify Christ.

#### **Verse 5: The Son compared to angels**

"For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"?"

We cannot count the multitude of angels. But there is only one eternal Son of God, and the Old Testament Scriptures present His supremacy. This begins with the first quotation from Psalm 2:7, foretelling the incarnation of Christ. The second quotation is from 2 Samuel 7:14 (LXX) and displays the relationship between God the Father and God the Son.

#### **Verse 6: The Son worshipped by angels (1)**

"But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him.'"

The quotation is from Deuteronomy 32:43 in the Septuagint and is linked with Psalm 97:7. Angels are glorious and powerful creatures, but as we have seen, they are made to worship and serve God. This was demonstrated when Christ was born (Luke 2). The angel served God by announcing the birth of Jesus, and then the heavenly host worshipped God in unison. It reinforces the status of angels as givers, not recipients of worship.

#### **Verse 7: Angelic ministry**

And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire."

Taken from Psalm 104:4, this further quotation details the spiritual characteristics of angels who are commanded to do God's will and execute His perfect judgement. The emphasis is on their creation by God to fulfil His will.

### **Verse 8: The Son's throne**

“But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Your kingdom.””

When the writer speaks of the Son of God, it is to emphasise Him enthroned. He is not a created being like the angels, but God eternal and perfect in righteousness.

### **Verse 9: The Son's righteousness**

“You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.”

In Psalm 45:6-7, the Son is distinguished as not doing righteousness but loving righteousness and hating lawlessness. Jesus said, I always do those things that please Him (the Father). The Father expressed his pleasure in His Son during His life on Earth. Paul writes,

“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11).

Like us on Earth, angels in heaven proclaim the name above every name and look on to the day when the whole of creation owns Jesus Christ as Lord to the glory of God the Father.

### **Verse 10: The Son's creation**

“And: "You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands.”

Verse 10 is absolute in its clarity as to the supremacy of the Son of God. He is the Creator. John establishes this at the beginning of His Gospel,

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (vv.1-3).

Paul adds to John's testimony,

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence” (Colossians 1:15-18).

The heavens and earth are the work of His hands. He is before all things and by him all things consist. All things include angels.

## **Verse 11-12: The Same**

"They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not fail."

Jesus is the same. Later, the writer of Hebrews declares,

"He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'... Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:5,8).

The angels promised,

"Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

Peter announced at Pentecost:

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36, KJV).

As Creator, He has the power to end the present creation and bring in the new heavens and earth in which righteousness will dwell and the love of God pervades. We shall rest and rejoice in the One whose love and grace towards us never changes, "You are the same."

## **Verse 13-14: The Son enthroned, Angels ministering**

"But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool"? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?"

The relationship between God the Father and God the Son is the golden thread which runs through the first chapter of Hebrews. No angel could ever undertake the work of redemption. Only the Son of God in love to His Father and to us could descend from eternity into time and as the Lord of life become subject to death. He alone had the power to lay down His life, take it again in resurrection, and ascend in glory to sit at His Father's right hand, awaiting the day His supremacy is owned throughout creation. At Pentecost, Peter quoted the words, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool" (Acts 2:34-35, KJV) before adding the words we have looked at,

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36, KJV).

It is interesting that angels were not created to sit down. They were created to serve. The most potent illustration of this is in the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle. The mercy seat covered the ark of the covenant. It was made of pure gold. Emerging from it in one piece were two cherubim standing facing each other and looking down on the mercy seat and the blood which was sprinkled on it every year. They stood motionless for centuries.

The sealed stone, which covered the entrance to the tomb where Jesus had been laid, was rolled away by an angel so the disciples could see the tomb was empty. Then he sat upon the stone.

Mary remained in the garden where the tomb of Jesus was, searching for His body. She looked into the empty tomb, "And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain" (John 20:12).

It is a compelling image to see angels sitting down. It was the moment in Scripture when these heavenly beings who were perpetually serving and worshipping God without any desire to be worshipped themselves rested at the tomb of the Saviour. They convey to us something they understood before we did. The great work of redemption was finished. They had always known and witnessed to the supremacy of the Son of God in eternity and in time. They leave us with a heavenly example of worship, service, and rejoicing in Christ's glorious redemptive work (Luke 15:10), an example we should learn from.

Thank you for listening to the Truth for Today talk on Hebrews Chapter 1: Christ better than the fathers and the angels. The first in a series titled: "Better things in Hebrews." Talk number T1397.

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