

As I've mentioned before, the first three verses of Hebrews sets the stage for the rest of the letter and puts into perspective the importance of having a proper biblical understanding of who our Savior is and why He came into this world.

There's the temptation for Christians to take the attitude that once we've placed our faith in Christ we don't need to tread old ground by continuing to learn about Jesus and His salvation. After all, I'm in and I'd rather learn how to effectively wield these spiritual weapons and flex my spiritual muscles and show the devil that I'm a force to be reckoned with.

And yet our ability to walk in this new life in Christ can only come as we learn and grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior. It's when He becomes the most important person in our life that we seek after that all of the other aspects of our spiritual life will begin to grow.

Paul understands how important this is when he says in COL 1:10-12 "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light."

Now obviously, knowledge alone does not accomplish this because knowledge of God needs to be coupled with a love for God as we obey and trust Him. But to minimize growing in the knowledge of God as we come to His word and learn more of Him is to short circuit our ability to grow in truth and be strengthened in His grace.

Paul never took the attitude that, 'well I've learned enough about God to take me through the rest of this life, I don't need to devote myself to His word as I used to when I was young.'

No, he understood something about growing every day of his life because he understood that there is no way he could ever learn enough about our Almighty infinite God in this life that would satisfy his thirst for drawing closer as he sought to know Him more.

ROM 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

2CO 4:6 "For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

By the way, let me add that putting knowledge in our heads may be part of this process of getting to know more about our Lord but just as important is spending time with Him and getting to know Him in the light of His revealed word. You and I, for example, could never really know George Washington for all of our research into his life, because George is dead and we don't have that personal access to him.

Not so with Jesus. We have personal access to Him moment by moment which makes His written word a living word as we seek His face. When you and I talk about getting to know someone it's inferred that we have personal contact with them as we take the time to learn more of them through personal experience. So, too with Jesus.

Paul had a personal relationship with Christ by faith, derived from knowledge of God as the Spirit has revealed Him, and because of that his life demonstrated much more than a dead orthodoxy based only on knowledge which creates religion instead of that relationship which takes the knowledge and comes face to face with the living God with gratefulness and love for the Savior.

And so he could say in earnest in EPH 3:16-19 "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

The writer of Hebrews wants us to begin our quest for seeking to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

And the only way this can happen is when we look into the face of our Creator who is none other than Jesus Himself. Andrew Murray commenting on Hebrews sums it up this way: "Our whole epistle is the unfolding of the glory of the person and work of the Son. To know Jesus Christ in His glory is the great need, the only safeguard, the sure growth of the Christian life."

And so we continue this morning to get a glimpse of Jesus in His glory as the writer of Hebrews compares Him with others in the created order.

HEB 1:4 "So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs."

The rest of this chapter talks about angels contrasted with Jesus. Why? Well, a variety of reasons are raised. The Jews were very intrigued with angels in their day and understood them to be very powerful beings given a great deal of responsibility by God.

Angels have always played a role in revealing our Redemption from God even though they themselves cannot contribute to our salvation. They may speak to us concerning this life found in Christ but they cannot impart life to anyone, only God can do that. Thus Jesus is superior to the angels from that perspective.

Keep in mind that angels were the agents through which the law was given to Moses. When Stephen gave his defense in front of the Sanhedrin shortly before they stoned him to death, he said, in ACT 7:52-53 "Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him - you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it."

Paul touches on this in GAL 3:19 "What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator."

Arthur W. Pink in his exposition of Hebrews points out that "it is necessary to show the superiority of Christ over the angels, because the Jews regarded them as the most exalted of God's creatures. And rightly so. It was "the angel of the Covenant" (Mal.3:1), the "angel of the Lord" (Ex.3:2), that Jehovah had appeared most frequently to them. From earliest times angelic ministrations had been a chief instrument of Divine power and medium of communication.....

..... It was the "angel of the Lord" who delivered Hagar (Gen.16:7), and who appeared to Abraham. Angels delivered Lot (Gen.19:1). It was the Lord's angel who protected Israel on the passage over-night (Num.20:16). Thus the Jews esteemed angels more highly than man. To be told that the Messiah Himself, God the Son Incarnate, had become man made Him, in their eyes, inferior to the angels. Therefore, it was necessary to show them from their own Scriptures, that the Mediator, God manifest in the flesh, possessed a dignity and glory as far excelling that of the angels as the heavens are higher than the earth."

And so the writer of Hebrews begins to show how the angels cannot be compared to Christ in glory from the O.T. Scriptures.

HEB 1:4 "So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs."

By the way this was not only a problem for Jews to comprehend it was the very problem Lucifer didn't want to deal with.

The angel, Lucifer, felt he was not at all inferior to his creator and wanted to share in the Glory of God. This was Lucifer's down-fall and led to his rebellion. If he didn't understand it then, believe me, he knows it today, that no angel comes close to sharing in the Divinity and majesty of God. Satan, as he is now designated in the Scriptures, which means to oppose, is the one hell-bent on destroying what he can't have. But we know that the gates of hell cannot prevail against the Kingdom of God.

Just as was promised to Adam and Eve after their fall, the seed of the woman has crushed the head of Satan. And Jesus is the One who has destroyed the power of Satan over the lives of people who have embraced the Savior by faith. And what is this name or title which Jesus possesses which the angels do not possess?

HEB 1:5 "For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son" .

The writer of Hebrews quotes passages from Psalm 2:7; 2 Samuel 7:14; and 1 Chron. 17:13. The idea of being called Son carries with it an identity which is only reserved for one who is of the same essence as the Father.

Angels are not of the same essence or being. They are created beings as you and I are. A Son is what Jesus is called because that's what He is; the Son of God. Now we need to be careful not to read something into this passage that's not there. Some have argued that since Jesus is called a Son that He was created or came into existence at the birth.

This is not the case. As the apostle John clearly points out in Joh.1:1-3 Jesus is the eternal Creator, which is to say that Jesus is God. What the writer of Hebrews is doing is demonstrating how Jesus accomplished the promise made of a Savior. When the Son of God took on flesh He clearly entered into this world, fully man and still remaining fully God.

This phrase "You are my Son; today I have become your Father" is in connection with the earthly ministry of Jesus on our behalf. In fact, Luke records for us these words in connection to Christ's resurrection.

ACT 13:32-33 "We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is

written in the second Psalm: "You are my Son; today I have become your Father."

The apostle John also points this out when he was writing to the seven churches in the book of revelation.

REV 1:4-6 John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the sevenfold Spirit before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the FIRSTBORN from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father - to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

And so in the sense that He was the firstborn from the dead He is regarded as begotten of the Father and has inherited a name superior to the angels. But it was more of a recognition of an existing existence; God in the flesh. This God-man will ever be greater than the angels.

HEB 1:6 And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."

Again, we see this contrast between those who are created and He who is Creator. Creatures worship the Creator. Those who are inferior worship He who is Infinitely Superior. Notice too, that in verse 6 the angels are identified as belonging to God. Therefore, they must worship Him.

Evidently, this was a problem that Paul addressed because some believed that angels were to be worshiped.

COL 2:18 "Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions."

And so the writer of Hebrews is warning the church not to fall into that trap of elevating spiritual beings above the One who created them. And so he continues.

HEB 1:7-8 "In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire." (Psalm 104:4) But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom."

In verse 7 the writer of Hebrews recognizes that angels have a legitimate place of honor in the Kingdom of God. In fact it says that God Himself has made his angels winds and flames of fire.

Now, what does that mean? God is speaking metaphorically. He uses the terms wind and fire and equates them with His angels in a way to describe what these angels do. Wind in the Scriptures denotes swiftness in association with what God wants to accomplish.

Wind is also a vehicle upon which messages are given. This is the analogy Paul gives in EPH 4:14 "Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming."

Wind, along with fire, is also associated with judgment as we read in Revelation.

REV 6:12--13 "I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind."

Revelation 16:8 The fourth *angel* poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire.

But these messengers of winds and fire are still under God's control. The disciples got a taste of this reality when on the open sea.

MAR 4:39, 41 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.... They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

These messengers of wind and fire are servants of God to be used by Him as it pleases Him. In some cases bringing a messenger of peace or protection, on other occasions being used to bring judgment.

And so angels are given a great deal of power and authority to be used at God's discretion as He wishes to accomplish His will. But, they are in total submission to Him in all things and worship Him continually with their service, whether as winds or fire.

But so as to bring this whole discussion back into focus where Jesus is placed infinitely higher than these wonderful spirit servants of God the writer of Hebrews brings Jesus back into the picture as he once again quotes the O.T.

HEB 1:8 But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.

No angel has ever been called the Son of God. But the Son is once again shown to be God Himself. The contrast is clear. Arthur W. Pink makes this statement: "How immeasurable is the gulf which separates

between creature and Creator! The angels are but spirits, the Son is God. They are but ministers, His is the throne. They are but a flame of fire, the executioners of judgment, He the One who commands and commissions them."

The writer of Hebrews makes it abundantly clear that the verse he quotes in Psalm 45 is Messianic in nature. It refers to God if you read it in its context in Psalm 45, but the Holy Spirit shows us that even back then it spoke of the Son who would come into this world and take our penalty for sin.

This Son has a throne that will last forever and ever. This by the way was a prophecy of the O.T. which involved the throne of David of which Christ is a descendant. Speaking to David our Lord God says this.

2SA 7:12-13 "When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."

No mere earthly king can come close to that promise because no mere man will rule over a Kingdom forever. Only the King of kings and Lord of lords could fulfill that promise and Jesus Christ did. The throne which the writer of Hebrews speaks of is the rule of Christ over all things. And keep in mind, all things are in subjection to Him.

MAT 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

The apostle Paul speaks of God's power.

EPH 1:19-21 "That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

I like Andrew Murray's description of our participation in Christ's eternal Kingdom. "We receive a kingdom that cannot be moved, because our King is God, and His Kingdom is for ever and ever. The rule of Christ our Priest-King, even now, in our souls, is in the power of an endless, an imperishable life: the faith that receives this will experience it."

Our eternal King is placed in contrast to those who serve Him, namely, His angels. Hopefully, you begin to get a taste of what the writer of Hebrew is trying to convey. Jesus is not just some babe in a manger or a 12 year old boy in the temple, or one who shows compassion to those

lepers and sightless who need a miracle in Jerusalem some 2,000 years ago.

This Jesus is our eternal King and Redeemer and the God of the universe who has all power and authority. It is this awesome God with whom we have come into a personal relationship as we've trusted in His perfect atonement on our behalf.

It is this Great God and Savior who has given us Himself as He has given us His Holy Spirit to take up residence in our lives to seal us for the day of redemption and to strengthen us until that day we see Him face to face.

He has loved us enough to die for the penalty of our sins and that same love is at work within us today as He is with us and will never leave us despite how the world would try to crush us.

Our awesome King Jesus is a holy God who has demonstrated His holiness through perfection in flesh as He came into this world to accomplish what Adam failed to do; to perfectly represent the human race and to live a life in total love and obedience to the Father.

This is why we read in HEB 1:8 "and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom." The righteousness of Christ is set against the unrighteousness of mankind. Had it not been for the righteousness of Christ placed to our account by faith we would have nothing to bring to the Father as satisfaction for our sins.

Christ exchanged His righteousness for our sin though He was sinless and took the penalty we deserved. It is righteousness which characterizes His Kingdom. Later in this letter to the Hebrews Jesus is referred to as a Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. The name Melchizedek in the Hebrew means King of Righteousness.

The righteousness of our King is the scepter of His Kingdom. Dr. J. Brown makes this comment on the sceptre of Christ. He says, "The sceptre is the badge of royalty and the emblem of authority. An illustration of this is furnished in the book of Esther. When King Ahasuerus would give evidence of his authoritative favour unto Esther, he held out his sceptre to her. So here the sceptre is the emblem of royal power."

And so the emblem or royal power exemplified in His sceptre extended to us is that He extends His righteousness to us as we would take it by faith and bring that to the Father in exchange for our sin. What a loving King who would give us the keys to His kingdom, if you will, and all that goes along with it just by believing on Him.

But if our King's sceptre is righteousness He expects His subjects to live in that righteousness in a way that does not trample it. We are instructed to be holy because our heavenly Father is holy.

In other words we are His children who are to demonstrate that we belong to Him and love Him in every area of our lives. But this brings us back to the amazing truth that Jesus Christ is God, and as such He not only calls us to holiness, He enables us to live in that reality as we rely on His Spirit.

What a great God who has called us out of the darkness of sin into His marvelous light of life and grace. Paul helps us see this more clearly.

EPH 2:1-7 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus."

We belong to a King who is Creator, who humbled Himself to be part of His creation so that we too might share in His kingdom which will last forever and ever. None can compare to Him, not even the angels, let alone human beings. Put your entire trust in Him. You will never be disappointed if you can trust the King who is God, our loving and gracious Savior, Jesus Christ.