



The Book of Hebrews: Part 1 of 4

Lecture Video Transcription

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In a book this long, transparently, we can't go through every paragraph, every verse, so we're going to focus on certain crucial passages and to catch the flow of the argument through the book, the analytical outline will be a huge help.

So what do we make of this book? Its readers, transparently, were an assembly, a congregation, or possibly more than one congregation, of Christians who at one time had been under persecution, but for whom the persecution had lightened up in more recent times. There is a considerable dispute in the commentaries as to whether these are Jewish Christians or gentile Christians. If they are Jewish Christians, they are Jewish Christians who are tempted to return to the social safety of their own Jewish communities, regaining the synagogue practices – or if they're living anywhere near the temple, the temple practices – and so forth that were once at the heart of their religious life, but which in some measure they abandoned as Christians. Now they're tempted to return to them and the author sees this as a defection from the faith. Alternatively, if they are gentile Christians, they're gentile Christians who are attracted beyond Christianity to a kind of Jewish form of Christianity taking on Jewish practices especially connected with the temple. In my view the former analysis squares with the facts a little better, but it won't make much difference to the overall argument of the book.

According to chapter two, verse three, they were saved under apostolic preaching. They had been believers for some time, (chapter five, verse 12) so much so that the author can accuse them of an immaturity. "By this time," he says, "You ought to be teachers." They had been subjected to persecution, (10:32) but this had probably eased more recently. Some of these qualities of joyful response to attacks, persevering under difficult times, still continue a time of writing (6:10 and 13:1), but the author is clearly afraid that they're going to slide into some kind of apostasy and a lot of his space is given over to warning.

Where this was written is disputed, but probably in Italy. The last verses read (13:24), "Greet all your leaders and all the Lord's people, those from Italy send you their greetings. Grace be with you all." Where it was sent *to* is hugely disputed. The primary theories, I suppose, are Rome, Jerusalem, and Alexandria. If I had to guess, I would say Jerusalem, simply because of the abundance of temple and sacrificial and priestly allusions, and the author seems to think that these things are still going on.

As for date, we don't know once more. I suppose the dominant view is that it was circulated about AD 80 or a little later. In my view, it still makes more sense to see it as circulating before the fall of Jerusalem. It's not simply that there are some present tenses – “The priest stands daily,” “We have an altar” (10:11 and 13:10) – those could be generic things that talk about how the system worked. “The priest stands daily,” that’s how the system worked as opposed to he is actually at the present time standing and doing his priestly work. But the real reason why a pre-70 date is appealing is that if the temple had fallen it seems to me just about inexplicable that the author does not make mention of the fact. In other words, one of his huge planks is that the Old Testament sacrificial system is, in principle, obsolete. If the temple were down, he could say the proof of its obsolescence is that it’s not available to you anymore; that's gone, it’s been fulfilled in Christ. If in fact, the book circulated before the fall of the temple, then this silence is entirely understandable. Otherwise, it's very difficult.

As for author, well... the three main traditions are: the Roman tradition which simply negates Paul, it’s not Paul; the North African tradition, which proposes Barnabas; and the Alexandrian tradition of the Eastern Church which wanted Paul. But, other people that have been suggested: Apollos, Luke, Clement, Silvanus, Philip, and Priscilla... that's only a partial list. As for my own judgment, I don’t have of a clue. I'm pretty certain it's not Paul. The locutions are too different, the ways of explaining things are not typically Pauline, and at the end of the day, all of the Pauline material that we do have, Paul actually specifies himself.

As for whether this is a letter or something else, many people see it as a homily, some sort of detailed sermon. It has some features of both. It sounds at the front end not like a letter at all. It sounds, rather, like an address, an argument, a tractate, a homily. But it ends with the kinds of typical greetings that you find in a letter, so it may have been notes on a homily that were then sent out as a letter, we just don't know at the end of the day. I will refer to it both as a homily and as a letter from time to time. The Greek is perhaps the most a polished literary Greek in the New Testament even tighter than of Luke.

Now, the main theme of the text is the finality and superiority of Jesus, but let me say a word about that. One of the words that shows up more in this book than in any other book in the New Testament is the little word “better,” *kreitton* (κρείττων). So, in chapter one, Jesus is better than the angels. We’ll see the significance of that in due course. And then, in due course, he is shown to be better than Moses in chapter three. He's better than Joshua in chapter four. His priesthood is better than that of Aaron in chapter five. And as you press on you discover that he ministers in a better tabernacle, and he himself offers a better sacrifice, and so on. Everything is better. I confess I began to think about the rhetorical power of “better.” Why doesn’t it just come out and say, “Jesus is best.” Why the comparative instead of the superlative all the time?

I first began to think about that, believe it or not, many moons ago when I was an undergraduate studying, of all things, chemistry. And, at the time, I lived in one of three men's dorms at McGill University in Montreal, halfway up Mount Royal. There was Molson, McConnell, and Gardner. I lived in Molson. That was the center block and the other two were on each side. These were towers of seven floors with about 220 men in each. Those were the antiquarian days when there were men's residences and women's residences. They're much harder to find today, but in those days we distinguished between the two. And there was quite a lot of rivalry among these residences. When there was a blood drive at the university, there was a push to see which residence had the highest participation and so on and so on. And, believe it or not—this is hard to believe—this is so long ago, there was even a sort of implicit contest as to who decorated the residence best for Christmas. That's inconceivable at the University of Illinois now, I'm quite sure. But, in any case, that's what we did. And on this particular year, McConnell and Gardner got a head start and they decorated their residences superbly. And Molson, my residence, we were just slow. We really did have a lot of "esprit," and most contests we, quite frankly, won, but we were way behind. So, some of our more enterprising members, the last week of lectures before everyone was disappearing, walked down the mountain a little farther to the Montreal Neurological Institute—one of the best neurological institutes in the world. Every year they brought in a six or seven-story high external Christmas tree on a big tuck all roped up, you know the branches there, and that had been delivered at the front of their building and workmen were going to set it up the next day and decorate it, you see. So, because it was still tied up there, our enterprising Molsonites managed to pick the whole thing up—there were about 30—and they carried it back up the mountain. And each residence had sort of two wings and in the middle was a glass front with stairs, spiral staircases. We managed to get this thing backed into the lounge and then bent and stuck its nose up in the spiral staircase, do you see, and then cut the ropes. So that, then, there was no way of going up and down the stairs and when you walked up the hill, then suddenly in this glass front there was this massive Christmas tree that went up the whole six or seven floors, parked, you see, on our stairs. And we draped a banner across the front saying, "Molson is better." Now, not to be outdone, Gardner the next day put up a banner saying, "Gardner is best." But, I think the whole university thought that we'd won on points, because there is a kind of a rhetorical power to understatement. Instead of affirmation of utter superiority, you just make every comparison, and in every comparison, Molson is better. And that's what's going on here too. Instead of some flat out statement that covers every axis—Jesus is best—undoubtedly that's what the author thinks, undoubtedly in terms of content that's what he's saying. And yet, what he does is compare Jesus on axis after axis after axis and in each case he shows, with reasons, why Jesus is better, he is better, he is better. And that needs to be borne in mind as you read through the entire book, keep watching for this theme to appear. I've indicated it in the Moodle outline with some parenthetical asides and so forth as well. Yet at the same time, you will see that there are some severe warnings in this book, several are embedded right in the heart of arguments, and I've put those in *Italics* so that they stand out in the page a little more.

So, come to the book itself. The introduction, the prologue if you like, verses one to four. I'm going to read it. Note the parallelisms. In the past, God spoke, but now, more recently God has spoken. Look at the contrast.

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

Now that argument is so tight that we could happily spend a couple of hours on it, but I want to outline the flow of thought, and then spend more time, in this class, on 1:5. You'll see the reasons for it in a few moments.

So, there's a contrast. "In the past," and, "in these last days." "These last days" are the days bound up with the Christian revelation with what is sometimes called the Christ event, the coming of Christ. And in the past, God spoke to our ancestors. In these last days, he has spoken to us. In the past, he spoke through the prophets at many times and in various ways. It really is important to remember that the nature of God's self-disclosure in word in the Old Testament is highly diverse. Sometimes, it's by virtual dictation—think Jeremiah. Sometimes, though God is superintending it, it's through the experiences of the writers. So when David writes, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing," it's not that that was dictated to him. He spoke out of the overflow of his own experience as a shepherd and in his knowledge of God. And so the way God disclosed himself, through words, to our ancestors, in the past, was diverse. We would say, in theological language today, the modes of inspiration were really very diverse. Moreover, God disclosed himself not only in words, but in great events like the burning bush, or the Exodus, or in catastrophic judgment. But in these last days, we are told, he has spoken to us by his Son. So in some ways, "by his Son," suggests that the Son is parallel to the prophets. And yet, the expression in Greek suggests that he is not simply one more prophet — *en huio* (ἐν υἱῷ) without the article, it has the effect of emphasizing the quality of the thing. He has spoken to us in his Son. He has given us the Son revelation. In the past, there were these word and event revelations, that's what God has done in the past, but in more recent times he has given us the Son revelation. The Son, in other words, himself, becomes, conceptually, the Word. In other words, the thought is pretty close to what you find in John's gospel. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And this Word is then later identified with Christ. In other words, Christ is the ultimate Word. That's not quite the language that is used here, but many scholars have written articles and books to show the conceptual similarities between the epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel of John.

There are other parallels with John's prologue here. We're told, "Whom He appointed heir of all things," referring to the Son, and, "through whom also He made the universe." That is, the Son is presented as God's agent in Creation. That too is very Johannine. It sounds much like the gospel of John. "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God... All things were made through Him. Without him was not anything made that was made." So also here, this Son whom He appointed heir of all things — that means therefore that He has the right to reign over all things — he is the appointed heir. It's got another significance we will see in a few moments, but He is God's agent, in particular, in Creation. And then personally, He's the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of his being. That's very difficult language to picture. The effulgence of His glory, the radiance of His glory, what shines in the glory. But you think of glory as already shining. The exact image of his being, well... You might use that language for a twin perhaps. Technically, the language is that used also when you're stamping out coins. You have one stamp and then you stamp a whole lot of them, they're exact replicas of the initial stamp. But the original here is God. So, if the Son is the exact image of His being, the exact replica, as it were, of His being, then once again you have distinction and identity. If He images God perfectly, how do you distinguish Him from God? And yet, He is God's image, not simply God. That's again the kind of identity and distance that you get in John's prologue. You find the rudiments, the pieces that ultimately construct the doctrine of the Trinity. In other words, you are not dealing with tritheism, belief in three Gods, nor are you dealing with some sort of intrinsically inferior being. He is the effulgence of God's glory. He is the exact representation of His being. Moreover, we are told He sustains all things by His powerful word. The closest parallel to that in New Testament, I think, is 1 Corinthians 15, which we looked at earlier. That is, all of God's sovereignty is mediated through Christ. This side of the resurrection, we're told that all of God's sovereignty is mediated through King Jesus. And so He is the one upholds all things by His powerful word and He must continue in that role and capacity until the end of the age when, in fact, He has defeated the last enemy—the last enemy being death itself. And all things come together under God.

Now all of that is dealing with the identity of the Son, and with the activity of the Son in Creation and providential sustaining. But now in the last part of verse three and all of verse four, we come, in fact, to the cross. After He had provided purification for sins He sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. In other words, we're introduced already to Christ's sacrifice, which is going to be a huge theme especially in chapters nine and ten. And the fact that He sits at the majesty's right hand shows that the sacrifice is acceptable. It is accepted by God Himself. In other words, this is the equivalent of insisting on both Good Friday and Easter. Easter is necessary to Good Friday in part because it is the vindication of the sacrifice. Otherwise, Christ could just be one more dead Jew. So He rose from the dead and then ascended to sit at the right hand of the majesty in heaven.

Verse four is tricky. I'll tell you what I think it means, although I acknowledge this is disputed. "So He became as much superior to the angels as the name He has

inherited is superior to theirs.” I think the name He has inherited is going back to his identity as the unique Son. That was already His. He was one with God and creation. That cannot be said of the angels. So, at one level, He did not have to become superior to the angels, He already had the name. Yet, after his death and session at the Father’s right hand, He thus became as superior to the angels as He already was in His name, that is to say what is presupposed is that He became lower than the angels. He had the name, He had the title, He had the rank, He had the role, and then He emptied Himself and became a little lower than the angels, which is the very theme that is unpacked in chapter two. And then because of His triumph on the cross, He became superior to them on that front as well. But that also serves then to introduce what dominates the rest of the chapter — Jesus’ superiority over the angels. Now, I’m not going to read the entire chapter. I’m sure you’ve read ahead of me. What I want to do for a fair bit of the rest of this morning is focus on chapter five and one other passage, and then next day we’ll make more rapid speed.

“For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are my son; today I’ve become your father’? Or again, ‘I will be his father and he will be my son’?” Now early on in this course, I said that we don’t have time to focus on passage after passage where the New Testament quotes the Old, but I said I would fasten on two or three test cases; this is going to be one of my test cases. Of the books of the New Testament, probably Hebrews and Matthew are the two books with most difficult quotations from the Old Testament. Yet, if you begin to get a handle on how these books quote the Old Testament, you gain some real insight into how the whole Bible hangs together. Now, superficially, the argument here is pretty obvious: Jesus is better than the angels, because Jesus alone is referred to as the Son. And then there are two texts to back this up. The first is from Psalm 2:7, and the second is from 2 Samuel 7:14. “For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are my son; today I’ve become your father’? Or again, ‘I will be his father and he will be my son’?” But the problem is, if you remember the Old Testament, sometimes angels are referred to as sons of God. Think, for example, of the book of Job. The sons of God gather together before the Lord. And they include the Satan. So it’s not even “good angels only,” as it were. Sons of God can refer to celestial beings, good and evil. And it’s more than just in the opening of the book of Job, it continues. Moreover in the Psalms there are a few references likewise where “sons” most likely refers to angelic beings. So, did the writer then, miss a cog here and simply get his biblical references mixed up? It’s more complicated than that, because sometimes the word, “son,” refers to human beings. “Son,” in the singular, can refer collectively to all of Israel. So, God says through Moses to Pharaoh, “Israel is my firstborn son and I say, let my son go that he may worship me.” So, “son” can refer to angels, good and bad, it can refer to human beings. Then, it can refer to individual believers; that’s not uncommon in the Old Testament, where “sons” refers to individual believers in Israel as opposed to the singular “son” referring to Israel collectively. Then in addition to that, as we’ll see in a few moments, sometimes “son” refers to the Davidic King.

So exactly what is going on here? To make the matter more difficult, chapter one, verse five, quoting Psalm 2:7, “To which of the angels did God ever say, ‘you are my

Son; today I had become your Father'?" But this verse, in fact, is quoted three times in the New Testament; here's the first. The second is in Hebrews five, verses five and six. Now, in Hebrews 5:5, God is there talking about what the qualifications are to become a priest. In 5:4, no priest from the Old Testament could simply take the honor on himself, he had to be appointed by God and the stipulations of the Law. Verse 5, "In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father.'" Again, same quotation: Psalm 2:7. The second quotation fits a little better, and he says in another place, "You are priests forever in the order of Melchizedek." But, what is the significance of quoting Psalm 2:7 in Hebrews 5:5? There's one other place where the same Psalm text is quoted in the New Testament, namely Acts chapter 13. I drew your attention to this verse when we flew by some weeks back. Let me draw your attention to it again. This is in Paul's great evangelistic address in Pisidian Antioch, and he's speaking in a synagogue to people, probably Jews and gentiles, who are biblically literate. And he says, Acts 13:32, "We tell you the good news: What God promised our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus." The context shows this means raising him up from the dead, not simply raising him to be a preacher or something like that, but by raising Jesus from the dead. "As it is written in the second Psalm: 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father.'"

So understand this, Psalm 2:7 is quoted three times in the New Testament. Once to prove that Jesus is superior to the angels, a second time to prove that he was appointed high priest, and a third time to authorize his resurrection from the dead. Even though when you read Psalm 2:7 carefully, it doesn't mention angels, it doesn't mention priests, and it doesn't mention resurrection from the dead. And now you begin to see why the way the epistle of the Hebrews quotes in the Old Testament causes some alarms.

All right, let me pause now for questions and comments before we start looking at the Old Testament text, making sense of it. Just questions about what's been said so far either about the prologue or about the problem itself as it's set out...

All right, the best way to tackle this is to look at the Old Testament text first. Before we look at Psalm 2:7, we'll look at 2 Samuel 7:14. That's the second text that is quoted in Hebrews 1:5. I'm sure you'll remember this context. David has become king after years of running from Saul, and for seven years he reigns in Hebron over just the lower two tribes. Then at the end of seven years at about the same time, he becomes king over the entire 12 tribes, and he conquers Jerusalem. And in conquering Jerusalem, he moves his headquarters there that becomes the capital city. Moreover, in 2 Samuel 6, the tabernacle is moved there. So for the first time, you have king and tabernacle in the same city, and the city itself becomes symbol laden from then on. This is the city of the great king, this is the city of God, this is the city where God meets with his people. That becomes a dominant theme, a whole theology of Jerusalem running through the Old Testament that is picked up in various ways in the New Testament as well. So, 2 Samuel 7, the tabernacle moves to

Jerusalem, (correction) 2 Samuel 6. 2 Samuel 7, then you get the drama that is outlined in chapter seven. Here, David wants now to build a temple for God. His motives may be very good. He himself is living in a palace of cedar, he says, and the place where God manifests himself is a bit of a ratty tent at this point. And he may, too, have looked around at the pagan temples in nearby countries, built to glorify their gods and expound the greatness of these people who live under these gods. And Yahweh, the God of all, the God of creation, the God of Israel is not well served by simply a small tent. Moreover, he could argue that according to the book of Deuteronomy, God himself promised one day, he would set his name in one particular place. The time for a mobile sanctuary is passed. Something permanent is now necessary. So he mentions that he is going to do this, and Nathan, the court prophet, thinks it is a wonderful idea. Go ahead, God's blessing you. And then we're told that that night, God interrupted Nathan and said nuh-uh, that's not the way it's going to be done. The reasons why God says no to the idea are really interesting. "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'" In other words, here God's argument seems to be, "I take the initiative. In these great turning points in redemptive history, you don't tell me what to do, I tell you. Did I ever give the command this is what you now ought to do?" And, of course, this reflects Israel's history. It's not as if Abraham, in Ur of the Chaldeans, had a quiet time one day and said "God, I've got a suggestion as to what should be done." Rather, God called him. When Moses does, as a young man, try to take the initiative, in fact, it ends up rather badly, he's running for his life. And now, again, David is trying to take the initiative and God says that's not the way it works. So God preserves the initiative in all of these great turning points in redemptive history.

Then he goes further. "Now then, tell my servant David, this is what the Lord Almighty says, 'I took you from the pasture, from the flock and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. I've been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all of your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth.' Now that sounds as if God is saying, 'You want to do something to make my name great. That's not the way it works. I make your name great.' In other words, when you push the God of the Old Testament, he is so spectacularly great that you do not add to him. You may worship him, but you do not add to him. This is coming back to what we saw earlier on in Acts chapter 17, where Paul draws a contrast between the religion of paganism and the religion that he is expounding. Namely, God is the God of aseity. Do you recall? He is so much of himself, *ase*, that he does not need us. So it's not as if God is saying, 'I'm just waiting for somebody to come up with a great idea of building me a big building. I deserve it.' No, God is the one who makes his people great and if God ordains the time to come when the building is built, it's by God's plan and decree, not because we are adding something to God.

So the argument continues along these lines, there are two or three more planks that are inserted. And then, 11b, "The Lord declares to you that the Lord Himself will establish a house for you." Now, clearly, there's a pun there. David wants to build a house for God, namely a temple. God says, he's gonna build a house for David, namely a dynasty. So, there is a pun that is going on which alone makes sense of what follows. "When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring up to succeed you. Your own flesh and blood and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my name." In other words, "The predictions of Deuteronomy will be fulfilled, but on my timetable, on my schedule. And he will do this, 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. I will be his father and he will be my son."

Now there are two or three things that need to be unpacked at this stage. First, the notion of sonship, I mentioned this at some point or other in just about every class, in every course, the notion of sonship in Scripture has much less to do with the genes and DNA than it has to do with function. So that in the ancient world, if your father was a farmer, you became a farmer, if your father was a baker, you became a baker. 90 to 95 percent of sons ended up doing what their fathers did. 90 to 95 percent of daughters ended up doing what their mothers did. The kind of mobility and flexibility we have today was simply unknown. So, "son of" language is part of identification, that's why Jesus in his time is called a son of a carpenter. That identifies him. Then in Mark 6 in one passage, presumably after Joseph is dead, he's actually called a carpenter himself, he's taken over the business when the old man is gone. So because of that, you get a number of these expressions that suggest linkage in functionality. "Blessed are the peacemakers," Jesus says, "for they shall be called the sons of God." This does not say, if you make peace that's how you become a Christian, that misses the point entirely. The point is, God himself is the supreme peacemaker. So, if we start making peace, we're acting like God. We're showing ourselves, at least on that axis, to belong, as it were, to the God family. And along similar lines, Paul can identify the true children of Abraham. The true children of Abraham are not simply those who have Abraham's genes, but those who act like Abraham, who share Abraham's faith. In other words, sonship language is bound up with commonality of function.

So, the point is that God himself is the supreme king. He's not only king of the universe, but he's king of the Israelites. And to a point, a Davidic line now as kings means that they're sort of under-kings under God. And thus, they're God's son with the particular role of ruling. And they must rule as God rules, they must rule in justice, in integrity, in faithfulness, in truth, in compassion, and so on. In other words, they're going to be kings as God is king. So, this terminology, that is, where a human being becomes a king, and God says, "Okay, today you become my son," in effect, that kind of terminology is found in the pagan world of antiquity as well, so that whatever human being became king under this or that pagan deity, they were thought to be, then, sons of that particular god, do you see? So, we're told that the son of David will be called the son of God. That's a distinctive use, that doesn't make

him an angel, it makes him more than a mere Israelite. It's not saying anything ontological about the nature of the Trinity, it's bound up with Davidic kingship. Is that clear? That's an extremely important point because this particular use of sonship occurs many, many times in the Scripture. Moreover, when the text says, verse 14, "I will be his father, and he will be my son," to whom is it referring? Now, don't think immediately, "Oh, it must be Jesus, I mean that's the right answer to everything isn't it?" No, the text goes on to say, "When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands." The writer to the Hebrews says Jesus was without sin. This has to be referring to Solomon. What David is afraid of is that even though God is establishing some kind of dynasty for him, how long will the dynasty last? He can't help but remember what happened to Saul. Saul started off so well he never even got to generation two, because he was so morally and theologically compromised by the end. And even if David does get through his life without that kind of judgment falling on his head, how can he guarantee what happens to his son? He can't do it. Either his son, or his son's son, or his son's son's son will become apostate, will rebel, and then will that destroy the dynasty? But what God says, in effect, "If he does what is wrong, I'll punish him with temporal judgments." That is, with human punishments. "But," he says, verse 15, "my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you." There's the promise, in other words, of a dynasty that will endure. "Your house and your kingdom," verse 16, "will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever." In other words, the promise of an unending Davidic dynasty turns on God's willingness to overlook sins, to mete out only temporal punishments, even to the most wicked kings in the Davidic dynasty. Otherwise, the dynasty would be destroyed.

So, "I will be his father, and he will be my son," in the first referent, it must be referring to Solomon. He is the one who will build a temple. But, in principle, it's referring to all the kings in the Davidic dynasty as each generation brings forth its son to be the king, then as he becomes the king, he's entering into this place of rule. And at that point, he becomes the son of God, along this reigning axis, he's the king. "I will be his father; he will be my son."

Now the rest of the chapter shows very clearly that David understands what an enormous privilege this is. He starts the chapter thinking that he's going to do God a favor, and he ends the chapter by recognizing that God is doing him all the favors. This is sheer grace. David can't establish his own dynasty, he can't guarantee it. But God is doing it, and so his prayer by the end of the chapter, "Dear God, please just do what you've said you would do. No more than that and that will be enough. And I your servant, I am not worthy of the least of these blessings."

Now then, within that framework, perhaps the most crucial verse is not verse 14, "I will be his father; he will be my son," but verse 16, "the dynasty will go on forever." Now, logically, there are only two ways that can happen. Either, in every generation as one generation dies, there's a son, an heir, that takes his place. And so the dynasty is renewed generation by generation, generation by generation, generation by

generation, generation by generation, world without end. That's one way you can have an unending dynasty. The only alternative and it isn't hinted here—it's not mentioned, it's not hinted at—but the only logical alternative is that one day there will be a son who lasts forever. But that's not mentioned here. And this, in terms of the sweep of biblical theology, is the anchoring of the entire Davidic kingship motif. Now, there are lots of other places where that surfaces in the Old Testament. Let me mention just two or three of them in passing so that you see how there is a whole biblical, theological theme that is developing.

This is about 1000 BC, time of David. Isaiah, eighth century, in words that we cite every Christmas again and again, or sing with Handel's Oratorio, Isaiah, in chapter nine, talks about this Davidic king, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." A son? "He shall reign on the throne of his father David." You're still using son in the same sense. "Of the increase of his kingdom, there will be no end." So there's the kingdom of this king, with enduring, expanding authority. But, "he will also be called Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace." And now you start expanding your notion of what kind of king this really is. Do you see? That's eighth century. Sixth century, in Ezekiel—Ezekiel 34—God himself, Yahweh himself, denounces the false teachers, the false prophets, the false rulers of Israel, he calls them false shepherds. He denounces them in blistering language, and then he says about 25 times: "I will shepherd my flock; I will be there shepherd; I will lead them to green shepherds; I will give them fresh water; I will do this; I will do this"—about 25 times—"I will distinguish between sheep and goat; I will look after the lambs; I will shepherd them." And then at the end of all of that he says, "I will send my servant David to shepherd them." And you start asking, and exactly what is the relationship between the "I" and the "David" who comes?

So gradually you begin to get these anticipations of a great Davidide, that is someone in the Davidic line, coming to the throne. And in each case, as he comes to the throne, God says to him, in effect, "Today I have become your father; today I have begotten you, you are my son." And that's the language, then, that is picked up in Psalm 2. Turn to Psalm 2 which is of course the first text quoted in Hebrews 1:5. Now, I'm going to run through this Psalm quickly so that you see the flow of it in its own terms. The Psalmist asks rhetorical questions: "Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth"—or that could be the land, it's ambiguous in Hebrew—"the kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against Yahweh and against his Mashiah"—against the Lord and his messiah—"saying, 'Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.'" Now, you can understand that perfectly well within the framework of ancient Israel. That is, under David or under Solomon, for example, in times of fortune and prosperity and the like, then the Davidic kingdom ruled over quite a lot of mini-kingdoms all around. And on various occasions they tried to throw off their shackles, throw off their chains. And really the author is saying, "How are you going to take on God Almighty? How are you going to take on Yahweh?" They're saying, "Let us throw off Yahweh's chains; Let us rise up together against Yahweh and against his anointed one, his messiah." Now, in itself, the term "messiah" does not have messianic overtones as

we think of messiah, as we think of Christ, it simply means the anointed one and the king was the anointed one. Do you see? Against Yahweh, the ultimate king, and his appointed king, who is the one who is ruling over this hegemony, let us break their chains and throw off their shackles. “The one enthroned in heaven laughs. The Lord scoffs at them.” I mean, how are you going to take on God Almighty? When you start remembering the picture of God and his power, he’s the God not only of creation, but of the flood, of destruction, he’s the God of the plagues, he’s the God who speaks and his every word is accomplished. How could you take on that sort of God? He scoffs at them; he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies him in his wrath, saying “If you think you are going to take on my king, if you think you are going to take on my Davidide, I’ve got to tell you, I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.” Zion, of course, simply part of Jerusalem, it becomes equivalent to Jerusalem. “I’ve installed my king. If I’ve installed my king, you can’t overcome this king unless I withdraw my hand of protection from him.” And then the king speaks. Verse seven; the king reflects on what God has said in verse six; God says, “I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain,” and then the king says, “I will proclaim the LORD's decree.” That is, the decree that established him as king on Mount Zion, God’s holy mountain. He said—this is another way of saying this is the same decree—“You are my son; today I have become your father.” In other words, God says, “You are my son; today I have become your father” when this heir of David actually becomes king; he steps into the place and at that point he becomes God’s son in this reigning axis. Do you see? As an Israelite, he’s already God’s son in one fashion or another, but he’s now God’s son in this particular function of reigning. And God said, “And God said to me, as I became king, ‘Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will break them with a rod of iron; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.’ Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling. Kiss his son” —yes, I know there is some textual variance and so on—“or he will be angry and your way will lead you to your destruction,” and so forth.

Now it’s just about possible to read that entire chapter with reference to an Old Testament Davidic king, a Solomon, for example. It’s just about possible. But, it’s not entirely easy, although *haaretz* can refer to earth or land, when you start finding expressions like, “the ends of the earth your possession,” it’s pretty sweeping. And when we see the sweep of the threatened judgment and the sweep of the blessing, “Blessed are all who take refuge in him,” then you cannot help but wonder if this is projecting forward along the Davidic axis to an ultimate David. And so we have tumbled into what Christian thinkers, Christian scholars, Christian theologians have for centuries and centuries referred to as the “Davidic Typology.” Now I know that typology has a bad name. That’s because there are some really bad applications of typology. The red cord that hangs from Rahab’s room is really referring to the blood of Jesus and that sort of thing. But, if you understand typology in larger terms, there are several kinds of typology, but all of them have this sort of thing in common. There are events or people or institutions; events or people or institutions which then keep recurring and recurring and recurring, often anticipating something bigger of the same sort until there is an anticipation that something greater is

coming. The very pattern itself begins to point forward. Now we're used to that notion already when you think of an institution like the Passover, but the Passover is celebrated every year. And that Passover—which looks back to the escape from slavery and entering into the wilderness wanderings and, ultimately into the Promised Land, and the angel of destruction passing through the land in order to free the people, and so on—it looks back to that event ultimately because it's repeated year after year after year after year after year after year; ultimately begins to project forward to an ultimate release, which Paul, then, can refer to, "In this way Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us." So that you have institutions and events and people that constitute a pattern. The pattern is so ubiquitous, it is so obvious, that ultimately, the pattern itself becomes predictive. It's pointing forward. And the ultimate fulfillment of that pattern is that to which the pattern points.

Now along this front, many, many, many have observed at Davidic typology, once you have established that God himself has ordained a Davidic dynasty that will go on forever to an ultimate Davidic king who outstrips mere David and who outstrips mere Solomon even, but is spectacularly called—eight centuries before Christ appears—the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. You begin to see how the pattern itself is pointing forward. And it's not just David in his victories. Psalm 69, where David is bemoaning being betrayed by his own friends and that sort of thing, that becomes predictive of Christ's sufferings. That is, great David himself was so regularly betrayed, and was broken. Psalm 22, Psalm 69, are picked up with respect of the Passion narratives. David becomes a pattern for the ultimate Davidide. Do you see? There's a pattern of things that ultimately point forward. My understanding then is that Psalm 2 fits into that pattern. Ultimately, you can just about read this chapter of a Solomon, and yet as part of a larger Davidic typology, then this language—"I will be his father; he will be my son," "Today I have become your father; today I have begotten you"—that language is part of this Davidic typology that finds its ultimate referent in that to which the typology points.

Now that still doesn't explain how we get to Hebrew 1:5; it doesn't explain how we get to the priestly language of Hebrews 5:5; it doesn't explain the resurrection language of Acts 13; not yet. But we need to see the Old Testament passages and their context first. Do you agree that we've made sense of the Old Testament text and their context before we see what the writer of the Hebrews does with it? Question? Yes.

Student 1: "Just a quick question on the Davidic typology. Where can we see evidence of that typology looking forward before Christ so we're not just reading a Christian framework back onto Old Testament?"

Yeah, it's a crucial question. The question is, "Where do we see this Davidic typology actually pointing forward to Christ and so that we're not simply reading backward our Christian understanding onto the Old Testament text?" Let me respond with a generic answer and then a specific answer. The generic answer is, in my view, there

is more than one kind of typology. In other words, I think that there are some typologies which establish a pattern that are not necessarily demonstrably referring to an ultimate figure. And you only see them for being the typology they are after the fact. In other words, this does fulfill this pattern without trying to say that any of the writers along that axis in the Old Testament times themselves foresaw that this is where the typology was going. So, I would argue there are at least some typologies that are weak enough that that's probably a fairer description. On the other hand, in my view, there are some typologies that really are forward-looking. Now, I do not think you need to argue that from the moment the typology is first established, the human writer understood that that's what was going on, but by the time you've got the typology itself established for several centuries across several biblical books, then even the Old Testament writer himself who is filling in the next step of the typology would have to be a bit thick if he didn't see there was a pattern here. So, in other words, he begins to see himself part of this developing sequence. And therefore, must start asking questions about, where is it going? Does it just go on repeating itself world without end? Or does it have some anticipatory force? That's the general answer.

But in the case of the Davidic typology, I think you can go farther than that. Don't forget at the root the initial promise was, 2 Samuel 7:16, this Davidic kingship will never end. How will that never end? Just by an endless repetition? Well by itself, there's no anticipation there of anything more. By the time you get to Isaiah, the picture of the Davidic king there is pretty spectacular. And that means that you are looking forward to an anointed one, a *Mashiac*, a messiah, who is beginning to attract, in the term itself, what we would call "messianic expectation." And then there are specific texts, the Jews in the First Century, themselves referred to. In Micah, "Where is he who is to be born king of the Jews?" the Magi asked." They quote Micah 5:2, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written." And so they understand that the Davidic origins of David, the Bethlehem origins of David, and the patterning of things looks forward to an ultimate anointed one who comes from the same stalk, and so on. So, at that point, you see, it really is pointing forward. By that, I don't mean that in itself that established all that we know about Christ, and his cross, and his death and resurrection. But it does establish an expectation of one who comes as a Davidic king who, on that ground, would be called son of God. Whatever other ground he might be called son of God, we'll come to that in a moment. But on that ground, he would be called son of God. Does that make sense?

Other questions? Yes.

Student 2: "How do you avoid overly-telescoping the New Testament onto the Old Testament when preaching the Old Testament as it is?"

How do I avoid telescoping New Testament, Old Testament together when I'm preaching from...

Student 2: "From the Old Testament."

...from Old Testament passages? There are two dangers to be avoided. The one danger is to read the Old Testament context in such narrowly historical terms that you do not see that the Old Testament text is part of a canonical development. You have the obligation not only to explain the Old Testament context—and be careful with the history—but you have the obligation to also read that book, that Old Testament book, say 2 Samuel 7, within the context of the entire canon. You are, after all, a Christian. Where is it going? The other danger is to do what you've warned us against. Now, to have such a telescope that you are reading the Old Testament text anachronistically. But if you start reading that Old Testament text anachronistically, pretty soon people with any literary sense, anybody who's reading that Old Testament text carefully, begins to say, "All that New Testament stuff isn't there yet; I mean, you're telescoping stuff." And what you tend to do is reduce the credibility of the Old Testament text itself because good readers can see that all that New Testament material is not there yet. So, a thoughtful preacher wants to avoid either, both, of those extremes. Now, how much you say in any particular sermon will depend on what you do regularly. I mean, if you regularly lay out these sorts of typologies and show how these things work, and your congregation is already familiar with them, then you might fly by a 2 Samuel 7 reference and say, "The ultimate Davidide, the ultimate son of God here, will one day be shown to be Jesus himself," or something like that, and, the rest can be filled in without some sort of nasty telescoping. On the other hand, if you never make those connections, people don't learn how to put their Bibles together. They don't see how or why the New Testament writers quoted the Old as they did, which is why, in my judgment, it is necessary, on occasion, for preachers as well as for seminary lecturers, to explain some of these things. Now I've just taken the first step in the explanation so far. Let me finish this off and then next day if you want to come back and push harder on this one, we're gonna do one more more quickly in Hebrews 1 next day. And then press on to other matters in the book of Hebrews. I want you to see that this is a pattern that keeps repeating itself, that there are grounds for thinking that these texts actually move forward, and that you can understand them yourself and explain them to other people. And, eventually, people see how their Bibles fit together.

But let me press on just a wee bit farther. If we're talking about sonship here, in terms of kingship, and if we're claiming that Jesus is the ultimate king, the ultimate Davidide, then the question that has to be raised in New Testament terms—now forget the Old Testament for a moment—is, when does Jesus become king? Now, that is, in fact, in the New Testament, one of the slipperiest questions you can ask, because quite a lot of answers are given. Matthew 1 and 2, "Where is he who is born king of the Jews?" He comes inheriting the title. A kingship is also sometimes bound up with his opening role in ministry. He receives the sign of the Spirit falling upon him at his baptism, and Old Testament texts are applied to him in fulfillment of anticipated promises. And then as he begins his ministry, he exercises kingly authority as he casts out demons and raises people from the dead and speaks words that have all the power of Scripture themselves. Moreover, he sometimes tells

parables in which he himself is clearly, in his own understanding, the king. Sometimes he tells parables in which his Heavenly Father is king. But sometimes, he himself is the king, as in, for example, the parable of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25:30-46.

And, at the same time, there's another element of kingship bound up with the cross. This is Jesus, the king of the Jews, the *titulus* says. And Matthew's gospel, especially, plays on the fact that Jesus is the king, reigning from the cross. We've seen that theme already. It's why, for the first three centuries of the Christian church, Christians played with the paradox, Jesus reigning from the cross. But then in another sense, he rises from the dead, and in his resurrection, just before ascending to his heavenly father, he says, "All authority is given to me, in heaven and on earth." In some sense, his kingship is bound up with his resurrection. That's where he attracts to himself, after his death, all kingly authority. And all of God's sovereignty is mediated through him. And so, in the New Testament, I suspect the dominant theme of where Jesus acquires his kingly authority is, in fact, bound up with his resurrection and ascension. So all of those other themes are valid—they're there—but that's common, it's an easy thing to verify with a concordance and look up all the resurrection passages.

Now what bearing does this have on us? One more small detail and then it can all be put together with two or three sentences. The way Christology is often taught, that is the doctrine of Christ, it's often taught with respect to discrete titles. So you have Son of God Christology, and Son of Man Christology, and King of Israel Christology, and Shepherd Christology, and so on and so on and so on. And they're so disparate that as far as I can see, although there are different emphases in the New Testament on Christological themes, I can't think of any evidence where Christians come together in the first century and are saying, "Well, you know, myself, I'm pretty keen on Son of God Christology and not too hot on this Son of Man Christology stuff." In other words, when Jesus enters into his kingly authority, through the resurrection, he is entering into his priestly authority. He is the shepherd. He is the Danielic son of man. He's the supreme sacrifice. He's the supreme priest. They all come together in him. Now, you could really talk of them one at a time, but all of them are the one Christ.

So my guess is that what Hebrews 1:5 is saying, is something like this: Jesus is superior to the angels because he alone is the promised Davidic king. And if you understand what the Davidic king is—who he is, what he does—he outstrips in his authority anything that angels can ever be or do. And that is anchored already in Old Testament promises, that in the Davidide, there would be this fulfilling Davidic king who is God's son; the one who reigns in God's place. He is the ultimate Davidide. And as the one who enters into this ministry, he is also the one who enters into the whole panoply of his anticipated ministries, including his priestly ministry, hence 5:5. And all of this by the resurrection, hence Acts 13:32 and following. Do you see? We have so broken these things apart into little Christological pieces with their separate tracks, that we forget how in the first century there was far more

integration about who Christ was than division and sectarian, sealed off communities with their own separate and highly disparate Christologies. And suddenly now the appeal to Psalm 2:7, within this rich Christological vision, grounded at the same time in an understanding of this Davidic typology that has its root in 2 Samuel 7—is picked up in Psalm 2; is picked up in Isaiah 9; is picked up in Ezekiel 34; is picked up in Micah; and again and again and again—it's part of a panoply that demonstrates the ways in which, by God's own decree, this Davidic figure becomes God's redeeming king.

Now there's one more thing I shall say and then we're done; then we'll worry about it pastorally and how to preach this next day at the opening of the class. You've got to ask yourself, what does this usage of sonship have to do with the usage of sonship in the opening four verses? Because, you see, in the opening four verses, the son revelation really has the makings of what would later be called Trinitarian thought: the actual representation of God; one with God in the beginning; God's own agent in creation; and so on and so on and so on. Now we're talking about a Davidic king, a son of David. It's a slightly different use of sonship language. Do you see? And the author has moved from, let's call it the Trinitarian use of son—certainly this ontological use of son where he's the exact representation of God's being and so on—he's moved from that to a Davidic, messianic kingship use of son in one verse, without any embarrassment at all. How's he managed to do that? And I think you can show that that's a pretty common New Testament move. That is, this one who is called son of God is son of God on several different axes, and he fulfills all of those axes and can bring them all together without embarrassment. The son of God, by virtue of his Davidic status, is an heir of David. But the son of God, by virtue of the fact that he perfectly reflects God and was God's own agent in creation, manifests God's glory himself and there the one son of God; he's the superlative son of God.

And thus, the whole thing begins to come together with an overwhelming impression; no angel can stack up with him; no competitor can diminish his glory; he is greater than the angels themselves. But the pastoral significance of that we'll return to next day. Have a great day.