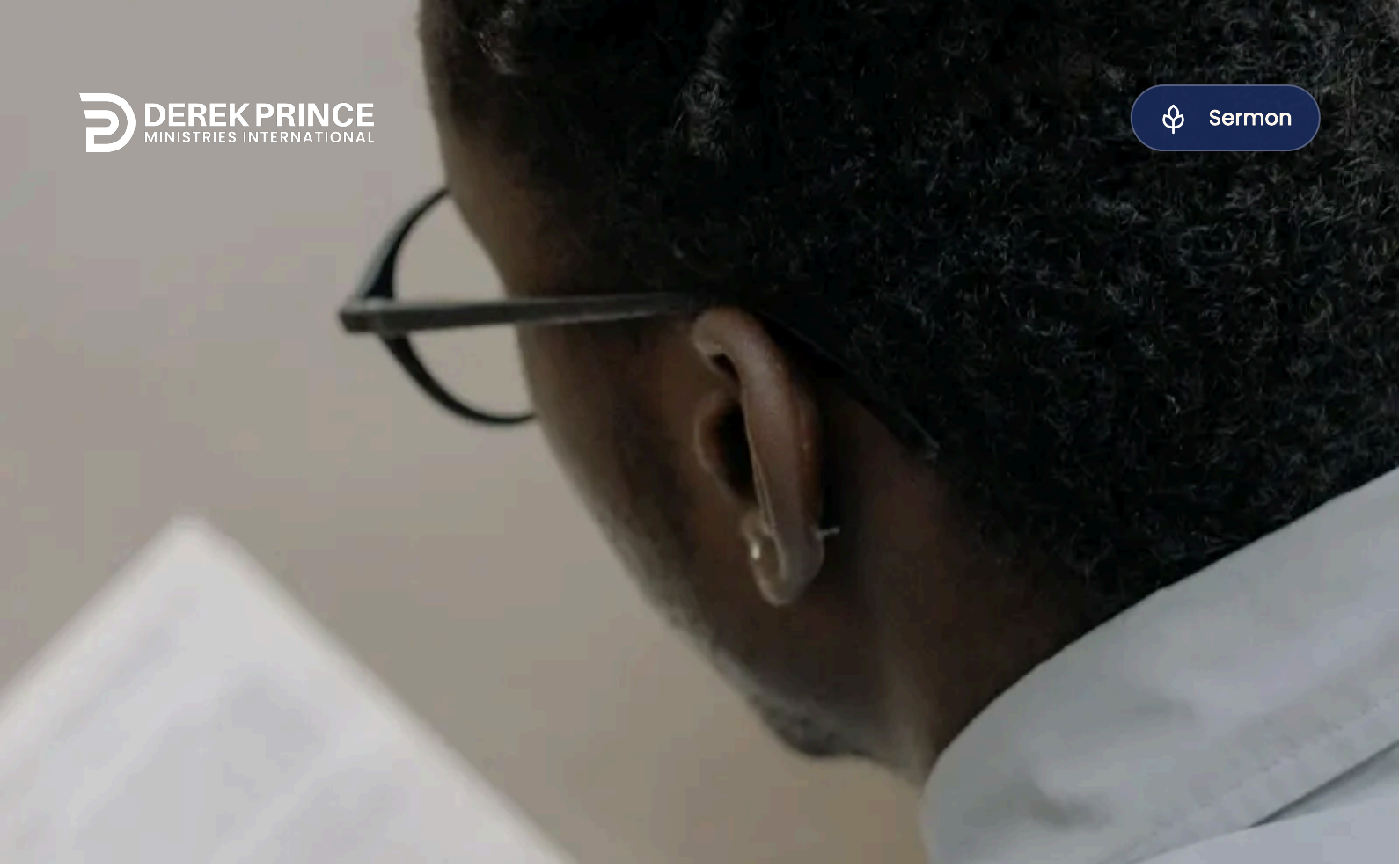

DEREK PRINCE
MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Sermon

Analysis of Hebrews: Chapter 1



Part 2/23

God's Last Word: An Exposition of Hebrews By Derek Prince

I'm going to very briefly review the material that we covered last time. First of all, there was a preliminary explanation of how we're going to do this. The most important thing for you to get out of that is I will be reading from the Greek New Testament translating extemporaneously as I go. We'll take plenty of time so if I say a thing that confuses you, we'll go back over it. The method of study will be analytical and, most important of all, I said what was required of the student. I hope you all remember that. I took five verses from the second chapter of Proverbs in which it lays down the way in which to receive from the Word of God. I said verse 1: receive and treasure God's commandments. Verse 2: attend and be teachable. Lay down your prejudices and your preconceptions. Verse 3: Pray earnestly. The Bible says "lift up your voice." Verse 4: Search and study. Searching as for hidden treasure. Then the promise in verse 5 is: you will discern and discover.

Now we'll very quickly look also at the material that's entitled Introduction which is on Page 0/1. I am not going to go through it all again; we'll just pick out certain important features. The date, we will just mention that it was written before the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, which means that the temple services and the Levitical sacrifices were still going on.

We'll not bother any more about the author; it was addressed to Jewish Christians. I pointed out that essentially, they were in the same kind of position at that time that Christians are today. They had the background of the Scriptures, they had the knowledge of the way God did things, they had His law, His commandments. They started with a tremendous advantage over all other peoples at that time. One of the serious lessons of Hebrews is they weren't taking advantage of what God had made available to them and they were in danger of getting left behind.

I think the real essence of their problem was they were not living in active, daily faith. Their religion had just become a way of life to them and so they didn't appreciate all that was given to them in the gospel and in the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Whenever people can begin to put Jesus on a level with any other person anywhere at any time, they're in danger. That's what they were beginning to do. They were beginning to think Jesus and Moses were just about on the

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same level and they began to think about Jesus and angels as being on the same level. That's always a mark of danger. If we accept the revelation of Scripture, Jesus is absolutely and totally unique and supreme. The Holy Spirit will never go along with any other relationship or attitude toward Jesus.

Then I said the distinctive revelation of this epistle that we're studying is Jesus as our high priest. I don't know of any other passage in the New Testament which contains that revelation. You see, in a sacrifice there are two factors. There's the victim that's sacrificed, the priest who makes the sacrifice. Many of the epistles and the writings of the New Testament point to Jesus as the victim, who was sacrificed, but only Hebrews points to Him as the priest who sacrificed the victim which was His own body.

The main theme I suggested is indicated by the words that recur. Inheritance, rest and perfection. It sets a goal for us.

The purpose, I suggested simply, is that we might have strong encouragement. And that word that's translated encourage means both "to stir up" and "to cheer up." If you're depressed, God cheers you up. If you're lazy and indifferent, God stirs you up. It's one and the same word. It's also a title of the Holy Spirit. There's the word paraclete, which is still used, I believe, by Roman Catholics. It's directly from the same verb. So the Holy Spirit, the paraclete, is the "stirrer-up" and the "cheerer-up."

Then we looked at the key words, of which I have listed 13, beginning with high priest and then grouping them in four sets of three because they go together. The first group of three: promise, oath and covenant — all of which depend on the ministry of the high priest to make them valid. Then the next group: offering, sacrifice and blood — which are required to establish the covenant. The third group: faith, hope and confession — which are required from us as our response to receive what is available in the covenant. Finally, as I've already said, inheritance, rest and perfection as the objectives to which we should be moving.

Then I pointed out that there are five passages containing very, very solemn warnings in this epistle. I don't know of any other passage in the New Testament which is in any way to be compared with this for the solemn, serious warnings which come again and again. I think the need for those warnings arises out of the situation I've described. These people thought they had it all and they were becoming careless and indifferent.

The things against which we're warned are significant. I think the order is significant. If you look there on Page 0/2, first, neglect. That's where it started. Second, unbelief. Third, apostasy: falling away. Fourth, willfully continuing to sin. And fifth, coming short of the grace of God. I would suggest to you that if you start with neglect, unless the Holy Spirit arrests you, you'll find yourself going the same way.

Then there are seven passages indicating positive, practical application which I've listed. I won't go into them. This is not the main theme of this epistle. The main theme of this epistle is revelation of heavenly realities, which cannot be understood in any other way except by revelation. We are shut up to revelation, the revelation contained in Scripture, to know the things in this epistle.

And then there are seven passages contrasting and comparing two things: the inferior and the superior. We'll just mention them because it'll get your mind in the right gear.

The first comparison is between angels and Jesus.

The second between Moses and Jesus. You see, where they needed that kind of instruction, they were already in danger.

The third was between the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Melchizedek.

The fourth between the Old Covenant and the New.

The fifth between the tabernacle of Moses and the heavenly tabernacle.

The sixth between Levitical sacrifices and the sacrifice of Jesus.

The seventh between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion.

Then there are twelve "let us" passages, which is really rather remarkable. In each case, as I've pointed out, "let us" indicates, first of all, a decision. Secondly, a corporate decision, not one that you make on your own but you make together with your fellow believers. And significantly, the first "let us" is "let us fear." I think the warnings show why the first "let us" is let us fear.

Then you have on the next sheets, 0/4, 0/5 and 0/6, all the references to the passages in which all these words occur, together with the number of times that they occur. If you just cast your eye over that and let it enter your mind I think it'll give you a pretty good picture of the structure of the epistle. For instance, let's look at the word covenant. It does not occur till chapter 7, you see? But then it occurs 16 times in the remaining chapters. So, if you are interested in what the epistle has to say about covenant, that's where you'll be looking.

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The first of all these words that occurs is the word heir, which occurs in chapter 1:2 and that, in a sense, sets us in a certain direction. We are headed for an inheritance.

All right. Now we're going to go into chapter 1, the note outline is on Page 1/1. Probably you have already calculated that the notes for each chapter will begin with the number of the chapter/page. Okay? If you haven't, I'm letting you into the secret now. So all notes on chapter 1 begin 1/something.

Now I'm going to do something I have never done before. This is a positive first. I'm going to start reading from the Greek and translating as I go. I'm going to do it pretty literally. How many of you have ever seen an Interlinear Greek New Testament? All right. If you have a real serious question, something you really didn't understand, slip your hand up and I'll try and take account of it provided we don't get too many because my aim is that you understand. If you don't understand, I've failed. Are you with me?

> "In many parts and in many ways of old, God, having spoken to the fathers in the prophets, at the end of these days spoke to us in a Son."

That's the opening of the whole thing. Going back to the first verse, God spoke in many parts, in many installments. He didn't come out with the whole truth at any one time; He spoke in many ways. Sometimes it was just predictions, sometimes it was types, sometimes it was figures, sometimes the prophets were asked to enact the truths that they were presenting. There were many different ways in which God's message came. We would say "through the prophets," but it actually says "in the prophets." He spoke in that way to the fathers.

Now, "at the end of these days." I'm sure your translations say "in these last days." We can't really change it, because the phrase I used doesn't have much meaning. But that's actually what it says literally. "In these last days God spoke to us in a Son." Let's consider for a moment "these last days." That might surprise you because it was about 2000 years ago. But according to the computation of the New Testament, the last days were already there on the Day of Pentecost, because you'll remember Peter stood up, he said, "You want to know what this is. This is what is spoken by the prophet Joel, 'in the last days,' saith God, 'I will pour out of my Spirit.'"

Look at another passage which is referred to in your outline in this epistle, chapter 9, verse 26. A remarkable passage actually. Hebrews 9:26, I'm starting in the middle of the verse.

> "... since otherwise it would have been necessary for him to suffer [now I'm starting at the beginning of the verse] many times from the foundation of the world; but now once for all at the consummation of the ages He has appeared to put away sin through the sacrifice of Himself."

Notice, "Now once at the consummation of the ages." What does your translation say? Does it say that? That's right. Or, "when all the ages are coming together to their climax." That's what it means. So, when Jesus appeared—that's approximately two thousand years ago—it was then at the consummation of the ages. It was God bringing everything together to the climax.

We need to bear in mind what it says in 2 Peter, that one day with the Lord is as what? "A thousand years." "And a thousand years is as one day." And it's speaking about the return of the Lord there. So, by that computation, approximately two days have elapsed. See, we are not necessarily counting the way we count.

But, it's very important to bear in mind that we are at the end. I'm not making any prediction as to how long it's going to go on. Because, it adds urgency to what God is saying.

Going back to chapter 1, "In these last days He spoke to us in His Son." Now, the title I chose for this series of messages was "God's Last Word"—not intending to indicate that Hebrews is God's last word but that Jesus is God's last word. And if we don't hear Jesus, believe me, there's nothing more to hear. You could have missed some of the prophets and caught up by hearing Jesus but if you miss Jesus, there's nothing more to hear. That is God's last word. That's why it's so solemn and important. There is a note of solemnity that runs through all this epistle right from these opening sentences.

I translated the latter part of verse 2, "God spoke in a Son." I imagine the translations say "in His Son." Is that right? But you'll notice in the New American Standard "His" is in italics. Is that right? Do you know why it's in italics? Because it isn't there in the original. It's supplied by the translators. You need to know that. Both in the King James and in the New American Standard. Words in italics are not emphasized, they're words put in by the translators. So, God actually spoke in a Son.

Now you might say, Why is that phrase used? I think it means it's one thing to speak by prophets, it's another thing to speak in a Son. It's a different way of speaking. Of course, it was His son, His only begotten son, Jesus Christ. But, it's saying He spoke through prophets at that time; now He's speaking Son-wise. Andrew Murray's commentary uses that phrase. It's another way of coming at us. It's not to be put on the level with the prophets. Jesus was a prophet but He was a whole lot more than a prophet. You find everything in this epistle all the way through emphasizes the uniqueness of Jesus.

We get a description of who this Son is in verses 2–4. The verse division is a little strange, I would never have put a little part of the description in verse 2 and then gone on. But anyhow, they didn't consult me when they did that! I need to tell you, of course, I'm sure you're aware, that the verse division is not in the original text. It was supplied by some Englishman in the 17th century, I think. It's a fantastically useful way of having the Bible presented because you can refer to any part of the Bible in a minimum number of words, but some of the verse divisions are very strange.

Another interesting thing is that there's no punctuation in the original text. There's no periods, no commas, no capitals. It's just that. You have to pick out. So, you find in quite a number of translations they differ as to where the period should have come—which is legitimate.

Here we have the description of Jesus as God's eternal Son. It's important to see it's Jesus in His eternal nature that is here described. He was manifested in human history as Jesus of Nazareth but eternally He is the Son of God. He didn't become the Son of God when He was born of the Virgin Mary. He was manifested in history. In Isaiah 9 it says, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given." He was born as a little child, but He was given as the eternal Son. And it's here at the eternal Son that we are looking at.

Now, there are seven statements made about Jesus in this passage. I think you'll be interested and challenged maybe to see how many times things appear in sevens in this epistle. Almost everything that's significant comes in sevens. So here are seven statements about the eternal Son of God. We're near the end of verse 2:

> "... whom He appointed heir of all things ..."

So that's statement number one. Jesus is heir of all things. Everything is going to end up with Jesus. He's going to inherit the universe.

Number two: "... through whom also He made the eons [or the ages]." Your translation says "universe," is that right? "World." Better universe in my opinion. But the interesting thing about that is most of you have heard the word eon, haven't you? It's a measurement of time or I suppose you'd say a measurement. That's the word that's used here. I want to be clear. It means universe, but the writer of Hebrews anticipated the theory of relativity by a good many years. In describing the universe he describes it rather from a time point of view than a space point of view. He made the ages. He set the ages in motion. It's both. As you all know, time and space cannot be separated. You cannot specify one without introducing the other. It's interesting that right here it's already implied. So that's the second statement, "through Him God made the ages."

Let me point out that the order seems illogical because the heir is at the end, the creator is at the beginning. But, it calls Him first, "the heir" and then it says, "the creator," the one who made the universe. The reason is that the whole thrust of Hebrews is to the future, not to the past. What this epistle is doing is getting us into our inheritance. So the first feature picked out is not that in the past Jesus created the universe but in the future it's all going to end up with Him. He's the heir; everything is coming to Him, including us. That's where our inheritance is.

We're now beginning verse 3. The third statement:

> "Who being ..."

I think they use the word "radiance," do they? Or "effulgence"? Effulgence is a very good word but it's rather a rare one.

> "... of his glory ..."

The word radiance, if you want it, is a good word. It's taken from the Greek word for "rays." Jesus is "the raying-forth of the glory of God." Okay?

> "... and the exact representation of his substance ..."

The word that's translated "exact representation" is used normally of a seal ring and of the imprint that it produces in the wax in which the imprint in the wax exactly represents the imprint on the metal of the ring. So what it's saying is, Jesus exactly exhibits to view the unseen nature of God the Father.

The word translated (I better look at your thing)—"the radiance of His glory," the exact representation of His nature. Nature is all right but it's not the most explanatory word. It means "that which is under something else and keeps it up." Interestingly enough, in Hebrews 11 the same word is translated substance. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." So when you hope for something, underneath your hopes (if you're a Christian) is your faith. Your faith gives substance to your hopes.

I tell you that so you see here God the Father is the substance shown forth in Jesus as His glory. I hope you're getting that. That's the fourth statement.

The fifth statement, still in verse 3:

> "... he carries all things by the word of his power ..."

Carries, upholds, sustains. Okay? Now let's look at the five statements.

Number one, He's the heir of all things.

Number two, the universe was made through Him.

Number three, He's the radiance of the Father's glory.

Number four, He's the exact representation of the Father's substance.

And number five, He upholds all things by the word of His power.

Pause for a moment and think how silly it is to try to put any other person in the universe on a level with Jesus. Buddha, Mahatma Gandhi ... It's absolutely ridiculous. People can only do that if they're ignorant of the truth about Jesus. It displays complete ignorance of who Jesus is to even come out with such a statement.

There's five of the seven statements. There are two more, but I've separated them because those five depict Jesus in His eternal, divine nature. The last two, six and seven, speak of His redemptive work. So we go on now to the sixth statement:

> "He made purification of sins ..."

Or provided purification for sins. That's near the end of verse 3. And, the final statement:

> "... he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in the high places ..."

He made purification for our sins through His sacrifice on the cross. And remember, 1 John says He's the propitiation for our sins and not for our sins only but for the sins of the whole world. Jesus, by His sacrifice on the cross, dealt with the sin problem in the universe once and for all. When God initiates what He's planning, sin will have been totally eliminated forever. There'll not even be any stain left by sin. There will have been total purification.

Then it says, "He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." One of the themes of this epistle is that Jesus, once He made His sacrifice, sat down. There's an emphasis on that. If you go on later in the later chapters, the tenth chapter, I believe it is, He's contrasted with the Levitical priests who never sat down. They stood offering often the same sacrifices which could never take away sin. Why did they stand? Because their job was never complete. Why did Jesus sit down? Because He'd never have to do it again. See, there's a real emphasis there.

Let's go through those seven statements. I want to imprint these on your mind.

Number one, He's the heir of all things.

Number two, the universe was made through Him.

Number three, He's the radiance of God's glory.

Number four, He's the exact representation of God's being or substance.

Number five, He upholds all things by the word of His power.

And then the two that relate to His redemptive work— He made purification of sins and

Having done it all, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Note that statements one through five describe His eternal nature. Six and seven describe His redemptive work.

Now, at the bottom I've put what I call a parable from the sun. I'm sure that many of you have heard it before, some perhaps from me. But to me this is a very vivid and beautiful illustration of what we call the Trinity. The word trinity does not occur in Scripture. I prefer to say "the Godhead" or "the triunity of the Godhead," in which there are three persons but one God. I don't have any problem with that. I don't know whether other people do. I just got used to it, that's the way it is. It could have been otherwise but it isn't. I find that truth runs all through the Bible from the opening verse of Genesis.

But this little parable is related to the sun. It's stated there. The substance of the sun corresponds to God the Father. No one has ever seen the substance of the sun. In fact, it's something of a mystery what it actually does consist of. The visible radiance is Jesus Christ the Son of God. But the rays that bring that radiance to our eyes are the Holy Spirit. If there were no rays there'd be no revelations. That's so typical of the Holy Spirit. He's always inconspicuous, you don't think about Him. But He's essential. So the Father is the substance, Jesus is the brightness, the Holy Spirit is the one that conveys that to our eyes like the rays of light.

We're going to take a little detour and we're going to look at a similar statement about Jesus in Colossians 1. I trust that you'll be impressed at how closely parallel the statement in Colossians is to the one in Hebrews. It's really quite amazing. We're turning now to Colossians 1:13, at the end of the verse where it says:

> "... he transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of his love [that's Jesus Christ], in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins ..."

Okay. I only brought that in, I want you to see Jesus is the person spoken of. Then, in reference to Jesus, we get these statements beginning in verse 15. There are seven statements about him. Number one:

> "He is the image of the invisible God ..."

How many of you know what an icon is? You know, they have them primarily in Greek Orthodox churches, Eastern Orthodox churches. That's the word that's used here, icon. Jesus is the icon of God the Father, the image of God the Father. It's essentially something visible. My personal opinion is why God forbids us to make images of Himself is He has His own image and we can't improve on it. Jesus is the visible likeness of God. We don't need any substitutes. That's statement number one, He is the image of the invisible God.

Number two:

> "... He's the firstborn before all creation ..."

That's "the Prince version." It would take a lot of complicated explanation to tell you why I believe it means that, but I believe it does. It's not "the firstborn of creation" but "the firstborn before all creation." In any case, there is a deliberate contrast between created and born. Jesus was begotten of the Father—if you want to use the technical word—eternally. We don't understand that. He's not created. This is the great error of Jehovah's Witnesses. They teach that Jesus is a created being. He's uncreated, eternal, divine. In Him (or through Him) all other things were created. So, we're going back to verse 15, He's the firstborn before all creation. Are you with me?

Number three, which is the entire 16th verse:

> "In Him all things were created ..."

In Him or through Him. You can use either word. And then it lists all things visible and invisible and the invisible are thrones, dominions, principalities and powers and so on. But we don't need to go into those details. The end of the verse says:

> "... all things are created through Him and to Him."

He's the beginning, He's the ending.

And then the next statement:

> "He is before all things ..."

He is eternally existent. He never came into being, He is. And the next statement:

> "... all things hold together in Him."

See how very closely parallel this is to Hebrews?

Let's just go through those five statements.

Number one, He's the image of the invisible God.

Number two, He's the firstborn before all creation.

Number three, all things were created by or in Him.

Number four, He is eternally existent.

And number five, all things hold together in Him.

Once again, at the end of five, we make a break because those five statements relate to His eternal being. The next two relate to His redemptive work. Number six, and we are now in verse 18:

> "He is the head of the body, the church ..."

That's the sixth statement. He's the head of the body, the church. And the last statement:

> "... he's the beginning, the firstborn from the dead."

So he's twice the firstborn: "Firstborn before all creation" and then "firstborn from the dead." I point out something which I just have time to mention. He's the head of the body, statement number six. He's the firstborn out of the dead, number seven. In a natural birth the head precedes the rest of the body. In the resurrection, Jesus precedes the body. He's the firstborn out of the dead. When the head emerges, it's a sure sign the body will follow. So His resurrection is the guarantee of our resurrection.

Let's go quickly through those statements. Five statements about His eternal nature.

Number one, Hhe's the image of the invisible God.

Number two, He's the firstborn before all creation. Born, not created.

Number three, all things were created by or in Him.

Number four, He is eternally existent before all things.

Number five, all things hold together in Him.

And then the two statements about His redemptive work:

He's the head of the body which is the church and

The firstborn from the dead. So that in everything He has the first place.

In the original order He's the firstborn before all creation. In the new creation, the new order, He's the firstborn by resurrection from the dead.

We're going to continue now in Hebrews 1:4. As your outline points out, this is the first of the seven comparisons which are contained. This time it's a comparison between Jesus and angels. The writer sets out to show how Jesus is absolutely unique and supreme and in a totally different category and on a totally different level from any angels. So we're going now back to Hebrews 1:4, which is really in this version—and probably in your translation also—not the beginning of a new sentence but just the end of the previous. The previous verses have stated these seven facts about Jesus, the last one being that He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Then it goes on:

> "... having become so much superior to the angels, as He has inherited a name that is more excellent than theirs."

If we want to know how much more excellent Jesus is than angels, we need to know how excellent His name is. I think the obvious place to turn there is Philippians 2. If you want to turn there we'll do it. I see everybody turning in their Bibles. I don't want to upset you but you might as well start in Ephesians 1 while you're about it where it says in verse 21:

> "God has exalted Jesus above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age, but also in the one to come."

So, He's far above every name and in Philippians 2:9 it says:

> "Wherefore God also highly exalted him [that's the King James], and gave Him the name which is above every name ..."

Not 'a' name but 'the' name. The name which is above every name...

> "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, things in heaven, things on earth, things under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

So His name is totally supreme. At His name, all created beings will bow and all will confess that He is Lord.

As we see how superior His name is, turning back to Hebrews 1, that is the measure of how much He Himself is superior to all others.

And at the end of Hebrews 1:4 it makes an interesting statement. It says "as much as He has inherited a name that is more excellent than theirs." Did you notice that? I will offer you my understanding of that. I can't say for sure that I'm right, but it's a rather strange phrase, "He has inherited a more excellent name." Philippians says "God gave Him [or bestowed upon Him] the name that is above every name." In Philippians where we looked it says, "Wherefore God also highly exalted Him." What I understand by that is Jesus earned His exaltation. He came into His inheritance by right because He met the conditions. What were the conditions? He humbled himself to the lowest point. So God has also exalted Him to the highest place.

See, both those passages in Philippians and here in Hebrews indicate it wasn't a whim of the Father to bestow this name upon Him; it was the appropriate reward for what He had done. Because He humbled Himself more than all others, He is exalted above all others. He came into His name by inheritance. Again, notice the theme of inheritance, which is here right in the opening verses. And there's a suggestion, I think, that if we're going to come into our inheritance we have to meet the conditions as Jesus did.

Now we have in the next verses seven Old Testament passages unfolding the uniqueness and supremacy of the eternal Son. You understand, these words were written to people for whom the Old Testament was authoritative whereas much of the New Testament probably had not yet been made available to them. So the writer goes back to the Old Testament, he selects seven passages. In each of them he shows how Jesus is the one referred to and how it depicts His exaltation far above all others, including all angels. This is a very helpful passage to understand how we as believers in Jesus and in the New Testament should interpret the Old. It is definitely something of a mental exercise. Believe me, it isn't all that simple. We're going to go through it thoroughly. I trust I'll be able to do it all in this session. If not, we'll leave whatever may be necessary to the next session.

Your outline should help you. You see at the bottom of Page 1/2, "Seven Old Testament Passages." Okay? The only one on that page is in verse 5 of the epistle which is what we'll look at. Actually, there are two passages quoted in verse 5. I'm translating now verse 5:

> "For to which of the angels did he ever say ..."

That is, did God the Father ever say. Now we have the first quotation:

> "You are My Son, I today have begotten You."

That's taken from Psalm 2. So we will now turn to Psalm 2 and look at the psalm. Psalm 2. I am going to the New American Standard but I may suggest some alternatives. The actual verse that's quoted is Psalm 2:7.

> "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee.'"

What the writer of Hebrews is saying is, God never said that to any angel. It puts Him immediately in a totally different category from all angels.

This second psalm is what we call a Messianic psalm. In other words, its theme is the Messiah. I think it's important that we go through the whole psalm quickly and see its structure. It's really such a clear example of the way in which Messiah is presented in Old Testament prophecy and figures. So I'm going to go through our outline on Page 1/3 pretty closely. This psalm presents one who is four things. Are you there? Number one, "the Lord's anointed." Anointed is the English translation for "Messiah," or mashiach, which is the Hebrew word, which means "anointed." Let's get that clear right now. The Hebrew word is mashiach, the Greek word is Cristos, the English word is anointed. Whenever we speak about Jesus Christ, whether we know it or not, we're saying "Jesus the Messiah." Cristos is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word mashiach. And they both mean "anointed."

It presents one who is the Lord's anointed. Verse 2:

> "The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed..."

That passage was quoted in Acts 4 by the apostles when they had been forbidden to preach any more in the name of Jesus.

Then it reveals one who is the Lord's king. Verse 6:

> "But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, ...

So He's "the Lord's Anointed" and the Lord calls him "My King." Then He's the Lord's Son. Verse 7:

> "He said to Me, 'Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee.'"

The Hebrew word for son there is ben, which is the normal word. But at the end in verse 12 it says to the kings and rulers:

> "Do homage to the Son, ..."

The Hebrew word is bar, which is another word for son. And in certain phrases was habitually used as a title of Messiah.

Let's go back and just look at the outline of that whole psalm because it all centers around Jesus. If you're still following in my outline it's set out very clearly there. It predicts seven things in relationship to Messiah. First of all, it predicts the rejection of Messiah by earth's rulers. That's in verses 1–3. The kings of the earth and rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed. Their declaration is "Let us tear their fetters apart, and cast away their cords from us!" We don't want to be bound by the requirements of God.

Second, it predicts the Lord's anger at those rulers. Verses 4–5:

> "He who sits in the heavens laughs, the LORD scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury: ..."

This is a frightening statement that it produces anger and fury from God.

Third, it predicts Messiah being anointed as king on Zion. Verse 6. God says to the kings and rulers of the earth, "Do what you will but I have installed My King on My holy hill of Zion." That's the heavenly Zion, I understand. But the word that's translated in the New American Standard "installed," I believe, is literally "anointed." It was, of course, always the practice when installing a king in Israel to anoint him. I understand there was a heavenly anointing ceremony for Jesus. That's my personal understanding.

Number four, it predicts the Lord's acknowledgment of Messiah as His Son. You see, in verse 6 the Lord speaks, God the Father. He says:

> "As for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain."

Verse 7, it's the Son who speaks, not the Father. He says:

> "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He [the Father] said to Me, 'Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee.'"

What day was that? What event was it? The resurrection, that's right. Begotten again from the dead. So Jesus, as we saw in Colossians, is twice the firstborn: firstborn before all creation and firstborn from the dead. There's no question in my mind this speaks of resurrection. The beginning of the new order, the new creation, the head. We saw all that in Colossians 1.

The fourth prediction of Psalm 2 is that God the Father acknowledges the Messiah as His Son through resurrection. We're not going back to eternity; this is in the unfolding course of redemption.

The fifth prediction, Messiah is declared ruler over the whole earth. Verses 8–9, the Father says:

> "Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Thy possession. Thou shall rule them with a rod of iron..."

The word translated "rule" is the same word used for a shepherd. The word "rod" refers to a shepherd, but instead of having a rod of wood He will have a rod of iron indicating the severity of His judgment.

Then the sixth prediction is a warning to earth's rulers to submit to Messiah before judgment falls on them. We'll read that in verses 10–12:

> "Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the LORD [or serve the LORD] with reverence [or with fear], and rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son [or kiss the Son, be reconciled with the Son], lest He become angry, and you perish in the way. For His wrath may soon be kindled."

I personally feel that's a message to earth's rulers today: You don't have much longer to make your peace with the Son.

Notice the combination of two things in Psalm 2:11. "Worship the Lord with reverence," "rejoice with trembling." I always think that's the right balance. You rejoice, but you also tremble. It isn't only trembling, that's slavish fear. It isn't only rejoicing, that's presumption. But, it's rejoicing with trembling.

And finally, the seventh prediction of Psalm 2, the last line of it:

> "How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!"

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Or trust in Him. So there's a promise of blessing to all who trust Messiah.

Let me just quickly read through those seven predictions. You notice again number seven. The following things are predicted.

One, rejection of Messiah by earth's rulers.

Two, the Lord's anger at those rulers.

Three, Messiah anointed as King on Zion.

Four, the Lord's acknowledgment of Messiah as Son through resurrection.

Five, Messiah declared ruler over the whole earth.

Six, a warning to earth's rulers to submit to Messiah before judgment falls on them.

And seven, a promise of blessing to all who trust Messiah.

I trust all of you are blessed. That's one way to qualify for being blessed.

Now we're going back to Hebrews 1:5, the second half of the verse, the second quotation from the Old Testament.

> "I will be to Him for a Father, and He will be to Me for a Son."

Notice the emphasis in both these on the Father/Son relationship. That is taken from 2 Samuel 7, we'll turn there. Second Samuel 7, we'll begin reading in verse 12. This is a message to King David sent to him from the Lord through Nathan the prophet. It's a prophetic message.

> "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant [literally your seed] after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me..."

Let's not go any farther. That was partially fulfilled in Solomon but not completely. Look at it, verse 13. "He shall build a house for My name." Solomon did that. "I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." That was not fulfilled in Solomon. This is an example of many such instances in the Bible where a human being is a foreshadowing of Jesus—but an incomplete one. So you get a certain truth but it's not completely fulfilled, you have to wait for Jesus for the complete fulfillment. That is a very common way of presenting prophetic truth in the Old Testament.

So, going back now to Hebrews 1, the second part of verse 5, the writer says God never said that to any angel. "I will be Your Father, You will be My Son." So that's His second Scripture to show how immeasurably superior Jesus is to all angels.

The next one is going to bother you. It's in verse 6 and I'll read it first and then we'll see why it's bothersome. Hebrews 1:6.

> "And when He brings back again the firstborn into the world, He says ..."

Is that how it's translated? It's referring to the return of Jesus. All right? Not to His first coming but when He comes back again into the world. He says:

> "And let all the angels of God worship Him."

Now where does it say that? The answer is in Deuteronomy 32:43. But before you turn there, let me warn you, you won't find it! We'll look at Deuteronomy 32:43 as we have it.

> "Rejoice, O nations, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance on His adversaries, and will atone for His land and His people."

Now there's nothing about the angels worshiping Him. What is the explanation? The explanation is that the writer of Hebrews habitually quotes not from the Hebrew text of the Bible but from the Greek text. How many of you knew there was a Greek translation called the what? Septuagint. So called because it was theoretically translated by seventy people, all of whom came up with the same translation. That's a myth, I don't believe it. But that's the legend about it. There were probably seventy translators but they didn't all independently come up with identical versions.

It was translated in Egypt somewhere about the Second or the First Century BC, and it was habitually used in most parts of the ancient world where people didn't know Hebrew, just like you habitually read an English translation because you can't read the original Hebrew. But, the text that the translators of the Septuagint used was not identical

with the Hebrew text, which is the standard Hebrew text today. Have I communicated that? The standard Hebrew text today is called the Masoretic text. It means "the one that's been handed down by tradition." And I think round about the Ninth Century of the Christian era, or the Eighth Century, it was standardized by the rabbis. It's never been changed since. They came out with what you could call their "authorized version."

However, interestingly enough, other Hebrew texts have since emerged which in some respects agree more with the Septuagint than with the Masoretic Hebrew text. Primarily, the Dead Sea scrolls, which nobody ever knew about until l947. But as you probably know, there is a complete text of Isaiah all the way through in the Dead Sea scrolls—basically in agreement with the Hebrew text we have with just a few differences. In other areas, particularly in Jeremiah, 1 and 2 Samuel, and a few other areas, there's quite a number of passages in these alternative texts which are not included in the Masoretic text which is where we get basically our English translation from.

If you use the Jerusalem Bible, they refer pretty frequently to the Dead Sea scrolls and other versions. The Septuagint version, which I have, is a lot longer for this verse than the one we have here. And, I wrote it out, the extra part in Greek, and I'll read it to you. "Rejoice, O heaven, with Him, and let all the sons of God worship Him. Rejoice, O nations, with His people, and let all the angels of God give Him strength [or glory]." Okay? So, if you take that and put one piece with another you get the statement here quoted: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." I hope you're not confused. I'm not responsible for the

situation, I'm just trying to describe it!

Okay. Almost all the quotations in Hebrews are taken from the Septuagint, not from the Masoretic text. Which, in a way, was natural for somebody writing in Greek. Just like if you were going to write a letter to somebody and explain your understanding of salvation, you would quote from the English Bible, not from the Hebrew Bible. So that's somewhat similar.

Basically, I would say the Septuagint is not a very good translation. That's my personal opinion.

Going back to Hebrews 1:6 and accepting this as part of Scripture, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." We notice that this is something that is to happen when God brings back the firstborn [that's Jesus] into the world at the close of this age. All the angels are ordered to worship Him. That is clear proof that He is higher than the angels, because the angels are worshiping Him. No one is ever to be worshiped in Scripture except God Himself. So it establishes His divinity and His supremacy to the angels.

I don't intend to stay any longer on that, I hope we got over that rather bothersome passage all right. We're now going on to verse 7.

> "But of the angels He says, 'Who makes His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire.'"

That is quoted from Psalm 104:4. This is an introductory passage to the psalm portraying the glory and majesty of God. It says in verse 4:

> "He makes the winds His messengers, flaming fire His ministers."

That's the translation I have here. I don't really like it. I have to tell you, I think the good old King James is better which says:

> "Who makes his angels spirits, his ministers a flame of fire."

At any rate, what it is saying is: Angels are servants. Okay? I'm sure I've left an unanswered question in the minds of some of you. The word for wind in Hebrew is ruach, which is also the word for "spirit." So you have to determine which way to translate it. I personally think it's much more intelligent to translate it "makes His angels spirits" than this. "And His ministers a flame of fire." I hope you understand the point is that angels are servants. Okay? So that proves they're not on the same level as Jesus.

Going on to verses 8–9. Now this again is a very important passage. Hebrews 1:8:

> "To the Son [you have to put in 'He says'], 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever ...'"

Literally "for the age of the age." Or, "an age that's made up of ages." That's a fantastic concept, isn't it? Not just an age made up of years, but an age made up of ages, which is made up of years.

> "Your throne, O God, is for the age of the age, and the scepter of righteousness is the scepter of His kingdom. You loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; for

> this reason, O God, Your God anointed You with the oil of rejoicing above your companions [or fellows]."

I'm going to say that again.

> "Your throne, O God ..."

And notice it's God who is addressed.

> "... is forever and ever, and the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of His kingdom. You loved righteousness and hated lawlessness [they probably say iniquity]; for this reason, O God, Your God anointed You with the oil of rejoicing above your fellows."

What I'm pointing out to you is that there are two persons in those verses, each of whom is called God. All right? That's the Old Testament. Let's go back to Psalm 45:6–7. I've never tried to do this before, this is rather difficult. I hope you're with me. If you go to the beginning of Psalm 45 you see that it's a theme of praise and worship of the king.

> "My heart overflows with a good theme; I address my verses to the King ..."

In this translation it's a capital K. So, it's the Messiah, the King Messiah, who's the theme of this. And we will not go into the other verses till we get to the ones quoted which are 6–7.

> "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; therefore God, Thy God, has anointed Thee with the oil of joy above Thy fellows."

The English translation does not exactly agree with the way it's translated by the writer of Hebrews because in verse 7 of Psalm 45 what the writer of Hebrews translates is "Therefore O God, Thy God, has anointed Thee." Whereas this one says "Therefore God, Thy God, has anointed thee." But it doesn't make any difference because in verse 6 the person being addressed is called "O God." Are you with me? So whatever way you translate it—and either translation is perfectly possible—you come up with this result: There are two distinct persons, each of whom in the Old Testament is called God. And the Hebrew word there used is Elohim, which is the normal word for the one true God. But, as I've explained to those of you who have listened to me before, it's plural in form. I–m is the plural ending. So you have the whole mystery of the Trinity really in that one word Elohim. But you see, the king who's anointed is called God. And it's God who anoints the king. So whatever way you look at it, you come up with something that's very remarkable. There are two distinct persons, each of whom is addressed as God. And one of them is the King who's going to rule with the scepter of righteousness.

Let's go through my outline just to try to make this more clear. We're on Page 1/4. This passage emphasizes the divinity of Messiah. Previously it's been emphasized his Sonship, but now it speaks about His divinity. And the following points I make.

First, the person addressed is Himself God. Hebrew: elohim.

Second, He's a king and He has a kingdom.

Third, He's totally committed to righteousness. He loves righteousness and He hates lawlessness.

Fourth, it's this reason that God anoints Him as Messiah. Again, Messiah earned His position. It wasn't bestowed on Him out of a whim or out of favoritism. He was anointed because of His absolute, total commitment to righteousness. He loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. That was the reason why God anointed Him or made Him Messiah.

And five, He has fellows [or companions] who are also anointed but not in the same degree.

I think I'll leave you to meditate on that, it's a very, very clear presentation out of the Old Testament of Jesus as Messiah and His disciples.

Going back now to Hebrews 1:10–12. This is the sixth Scripture. I hope I'm not confusing you. The sixth Scripture, and it's a lengthy one. Beginning in verse 10:

> "And [in other words, here's another quotation coming:], 'You, in the beginning, O LORD, founded the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands; they will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old as

> a garment, and like a cloak [or a mantle] You will roll them up; and as a garment they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will never pass away.'"

What do they say there? Give me a good translation. "Never come to an end." It really means never run out. So that's the next passage, it's taken from Psalm 102:25–27. I will confess to you for many years I found it difficult to see how the writer of Hebrews could include this. Let's look in Psalm 102:25–27:

> "Of old Thou didst found the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. Even they will perish, but Thou dost endure; and all of them will wear out like a garment; like clothing Thou wilt change them, and they will be changed. But Thou art the same, and Thy years will not come to an end."

Now "they," obviously, that is God the Creator that's addressed. Maybe you have no problem, I don't want to start one for you. My problem was, Why does that refer to the Messiah? Except on the basis of the fact that the New Testament teaches that all things were created by Him. But that is not an argument for people who are coming out of the Old Testament. So it won't do. See what I'm saying? So, I spent much time studying this psalm and I came to a conclusion. If you go back to the beginning of the psalm, the psalmist is in deep distress and depression. Everything has gone wrong and he says in verse 6 rather pathetically:

> "I resemble a pelican of the wilderness; I have become like an owl of the waste places. I have become like a lonely bird on a housetop."

Then he goes on to talk about his enemies and he says in verse 11: "I'm withering away like grass." Then he turns to the Lord and the tone changes. He lifts up his eyes to the Lord in faith and says in verse 12:

> "But Thou, O LORD, dost abide forever; and Thy name to all generations. Thou wilt arise and have compassion on Zion; for it is time to be gracious to her, for the appointed time has come. Surely Thy servants find pleasure in her stones, and feel pity for her dust. So the nations will fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth Thy glory."

God is going to intervene through the Messiah on behalf of Zion in a way that will bring glory to His name and all nations will see it. That's the theme.

Now verse 16, I prefer the other translations. This one puts it in the past tense.

> "For the LORD has built up Zion ..."

I don't like that. You find the New International Version, the King James and most of the other versions put it in the future.

> "For the LORD will build up Zion, He will appear in His glory."

One of the great indications that the Lord is getting ready to appear in His glory is that He is building up Zion.

So here it speaks about the Lord, the Messiah, building up Zion and appearing in His glory. That cannot be God the Father. See my process of reasoning? So, when it comes to the end I understand now why the writer of Hebrews says this was addressed to the Messiah.

> "Of old Thou didst found the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands."

It's not addressed to God the Father, it's addressed to the Lord who will appear after He has built up Zion. Are you with me? If you never had the problem you probably don't appreciate the solution. But you can think it over for yourself. To me, it's been a real problem because I could see exactly the application of all the other passages quoted but this one I found difficult.

We're going back to Hebrews 1:13, which is the seventh quotation from the Old Testament. Notice again it has to be seven. I didn't do anything to make it that way, it just came out.

> "But to which of the angels has He ever said, 'Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet?'"

That is taken from Psalm 110. Let's look in Psalm 110 for a moment. Verse 1:

> "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.'"

The LORD is God, who is "my Lord." Well, rather than try to expound that myself, I'll turn to the words of Jesus. This passage is quoted in the three synoptic gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke. It's also quoted by the apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:34–35. All those references are in your outline. Let's just look in Matthew 22 because Jesus Himself faces the Pharisees with the interpretation of this passage. Matthew 22, beginning at verse 41:

> "Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, 'What do you think about the Christ...?"

The Messiah. If you want to get the real implication you must say "Messiah" there.

> "'What do you think about the [Messiah], whose son is He?' They said to Him, 'The son of David.'"

Everybody at that time believed that. Which, of course, is true.

> "He said to them, 'Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying, 'The LORD said to My lord, sit at My right hand, until I put Thine enemies beneath Thy feet.'"

You see, everybody agreed this is a picture of the Messiah, but what the Pharisees had never seen is though He was the son of David, David speaks about Him as "my Lord." How can that be? That's the question.

Verse 45, Jesus presses it home on them.

> "If David then calls him 'Lord,' how is He his son?"

He doesn't say He isn't his son, but He said, "What kind of a son is He that His father calls Him "my Lord." And there's no answer given.

> "And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question."

This passage, Psalm 110:1, interestingly enough occurs in the three synoptic gospels, that's three times; once in Acts, that's four times; here in Hebrews 1, that's five times; and I think twice more in Hebrews. So it is almost certainly the most quoted verse from the Old Testament in the New—which is interesting.

We're doing very well, I didn't believe it was possible, but we've got to the end of chapter 1, there's one more verse left. Verse 14 of chapter 1. Verse 13 said, "To which of the angels did he ever say, 'Sit at My right hand'"? And then verse 14 says:

> "Are they not all ministering spirits, who are being sent forth to serve for those who are due to inherit salvation?"

Again, the contrast is brought out. Angels are servants; the Messiah is God's Son. He's the King, He's God Himself. See, those passages quoted there bring out He's the king, He's the Messiah, He's the Son of God and He is God. Those are not true, those statements, of any angels.

Congratulations to all of us, we've got through the first chapter!

Sermon

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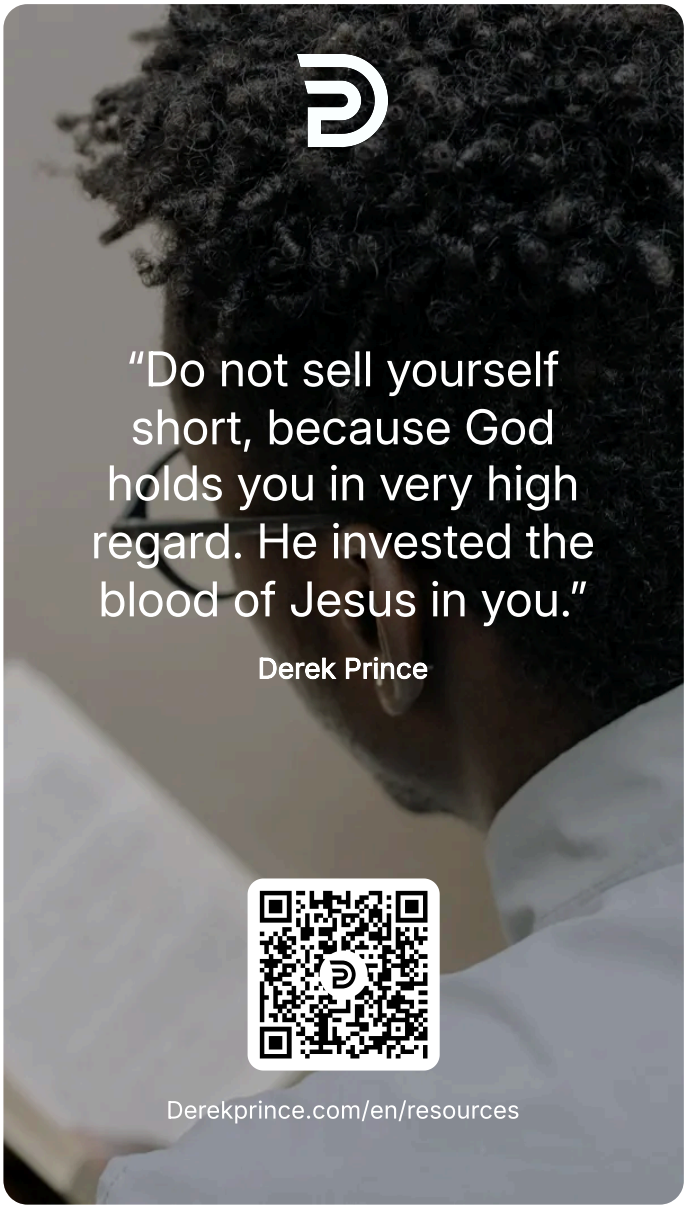

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