



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 1:1-4

“Late in Time Behold Him Come”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] For the Scripture reading this morning will you turn with me first to the Gospel of John? I want to read the opening 14 verses of that chapter and then a few verses in the 1st chapter of the letter to the Hebrews. John chapter 1 and verse 1, in this very beautiful and important prologue to the gospel, the apostle writes,

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness overcame it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

By the way occasionally you will find some people who will say that John the Baptist’s ministry was a ministry in which repentance was offered through water baptism for he preached a baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins. But you can see from the prologue that John the Apostle regarded the term of salvation, that is, the basis upon which we receive life to be simply to believe. And he says that John came for a

witness, that is John the Baptist, "That all men through him might believe." And so, he saw no contradiction between a simple faith as the means by which we receive life and the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. It is repentance for the remission of sins, and baptism as a testimony to that transaction. The apostle continues,

"He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name: Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

Now we turn to the 1st chapter of the letter to the Hebrews and read the first 4 verses, Hebrews chapter 1 verse 1 through verse 4. It's very difficult to improve, in my opinion, upon the opening of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the Authorized Version. This is a magnificent beginning from the standpoint of the English text. He begins with God. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."

Now that expression, "By his Son," is literally simply "in Son." There is no article. There is no pronoun, simply "in Son," *en huios*. Now when there is no article, no pronoun, stress does not rest upon the particularity of that represented by the noun, in this case Son, but upon the characteristics of it, the quality of it. So in order to stress this and make it plain, we have to paraphrase in English, and perhaps we could paraphrase it this way, "Hath in these last days spoken unto us in, or by, such a person as a son," stress then rests upon the revelation as a Son-wise revelation, as over against a book-wise, or

other types of means of revelation. By a Son-wise, by such a person as a son, that is how God is spoken.

Now he describes him. “Whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins.” After the meeting this morning I sat down at the table with someone and they said, “I had never noticed those words, ‘By himself,’ when he had ‘by himself’ purged our sins.” For purification of sin is the work of the Son of God alone. Again the original text lays a little bit of stress on that by the voice of the participle. “When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high: Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”

Now the name of the angels is simply messenger. That’s what an angel is, a messenger. That’s what his name means, messenger. But his name is Son, Son of God, far greater name than the name messenger.

May the Lord bless this reading of his word? Let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[prayer removed from audio]

[Message] The subject for this morning’s message is a clause taken from that hymn that we have just sung. “Late in Time Behold Him Come,” and as a reference to the fact that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has said, “Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.” Whenever we turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews we think of the many unanswered questions about this sublime epistle. We do not know, for example, when the epistle was written. We really do not know with certainty to whom it was

addressed. We do not know where the author was when he penned this letter, and of course, we do not know by whom the epistle was written.

It is very commonly said among popular students of the Scriptures that the Apostle Paul wrote it. There are some in ancient times who sought to defend the Pauline authorship. For example, in Alexandria it was generally thought in the 3rd century that Paul was the author of the epistle. Clement of Alexandria, for example, sought to defend the Pauline authorship.

On the North African coast however, at the same time, the authorship of Barnabas was defended by Tertullian, the African church father. Barnabas is a rather interesting suggestion because he was a Levite and therefore he would have understood the Levitical cultus and this great Epistle to the Hebrews is full of references to the Levitical ceremonies of the Old Testament. Barnabas also was from Cyprus, and we know that on the island of Cyprus some of the best of Greek was spoken, and whoever wrote the epistle was an accomplished student of the Greek language for the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews is at least as good as any of that in the New Testament. Some think it is the best. In addition Barnabas is called in the Bible a son of consolation, and of course the author of this epistle when he finishes his letter in the 13th chapter in the 22nd verse says, with reference to the epistle that he has just written, "And I beseech you brethren suffer the word of exhortation for I have written a letter unto you in few words." And so it would be very fitting for a son of exhortation or consolation to write a letter of consolation. But there is no textual evidence that Barnabas had any association with the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Luther in a characteristic brilliant way suggested that Apollos may well have been the author. Now Apollos, we know from the description in the word of God was an eloquent Christian, an eloquent speaker. And whoever wrote this epistle was eloquent, at least when he put his pen in hand because this epistle is a tremendous expression of eloquent spiritual thinking and writing. In some ways, in my opinion, it's the most

eloquent of all of the books of the New Testament. It has been called the most extensively developed and logically sustained piece of theological argumentation in the whole of the New Testament, and what makes it even more brilliant is the fact that it is done in such beautiful style. Apollos was a mighty man in the Scriptures we are told in Acts chapter 18. And whoever wrote the epistle was mighty in the Scriptures too.

The most unusual suggestion regarding authorship was made by the German church historian Adolf Harnack. Harnack suggested that Aquila and Priscilla are the authors, and that as a matter of fact Priscilla is the real author of the epistle, and Aquila's name is associated only because the early church would never have countenanced a woman's writing finding its way into the New Testament. But it was his opinion that Priscilla probably wrote this epistle. Now most have smiled at that suggestion because of course there is no textual evidence for that anymore than there is for Apollos as author. But there is something in the epistle itself that rules out the authorship by Priscilla.

Now in I was teaching at seminary, since I was teaching only men we used to have a little fun with that suggestion, and I would say to them, as was often said, "It could not have been Priscilla because in the 22nd verse of the 13th chapter he says, "And I beseech you brethren suffer the word of exhortation for I have written a letter unto you in few words," and no woman would write a letter in few words. [Laughter] Well we laughed about that and of course the argument is not a very cogent argument, I admit. But one of my students some years ago came up and said, "Now, Dr. Johnson, you were laughing about that as if that were a joke, but isn't that exactly what a woman would do." He was very serious. He said, "Wouldn't she write a letter of 13 chapters and call it an epistle of few words." [Laughter] Well, that may be a more cogent argument, but of course there is no real support for one or the other.

We do know however, unfortunately for the feminists of the present day that this epistle was written by a man and not by a woman, and the way we know is through the Greek language. And some have missed this. In fact I read a paper written by a woman

seeking to defend the female authorship of this epistle, but unfortunately she evidently had not read it in the Greek text, or if she had she had overlooked this grammatical point because in the 32nd verse of the 11th chapter of the epistle, the author of the epistle, whoever he was, says, "And what shall I more say for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon." Now the "me" is in a form that could be either masculine or feminine, and so just if we had simply that we would not know whether the author was a male or a female, but we have a participle modifying that me. Now participles in Greek modify in gender, number and case. So gender modification is important, and that participle is translated to tell. "For the time would fail me to tell," or "Time would fail me in telling." Now fortunately in the accusative case in the participle there are three different endings to mark out the three genders, masculine, feminine and neuter, and in this case it is the masculine ending that is used. And so consequently the author of the epistle, whoever he was, was at least a male.

Now the thing that is interesting about this to me is not whether it's a male or a female. The thing that's interesting to me is here is an epistle that found its way into the New Testament, into the 27 books of the New Testament, which the church selected by the providential guidance of the Holy Spirit. They were led to the recognition of those parts of the New Testament that were inspired by God through the spirit, and among them is this epistle written by a man who is so far as we are concerned unknown to us with certainty. It's conceivable that it was Paul. It's conceivable that it was Barnabas. It's more conceivable in the minds of some that it was Apollos, but it might be someone of whom we have no record whatsoever.

Now that would indicate that in the early church there was a richness of theological and spiritual experience that is far beyond that which we may have in our minds as characteristic of that time. It may suggest to us that in the early church there was a rich variety of individuals who had attained to a depth of spiritual experience that is

rather amazing. That's the thing that interests me about this, and so I'm going to be very interested to find out who wrote this epistle when we get to heaven.

Arthur T. Pierson, one of the Bible teachers of a generation or so ago used to say that perhaps this is the message that the Lord Jesus gave the disciples on the Emmaus road. After having said,

"O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Messiah to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

Now, surely if that took place and it did all Christians would be interested in what Jesus said on the Emmaus road. And so it may well be that what we have here is something from that great address which began early in the morning and did not stop until evening. But again we cannot be sure of that there is not documentation for it whatsoever. One thing is certain, what we have in this epistle is the voice of God, and it may well be that the Holy Spirit's intention to impress upon us that this is the voice of God led him to give us an anonymous epistle so that we would not think about Paul, that we would not think about Barnabas or Apollos, but think of this as a message from the Lord to us, from the Lord himself.

Now he says that he has spoken unto us in his Son. In chapter 12 in verse 25, near the end of the epistle, he says, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." In an epistle which quotes from the Old Testament perhaps more than any other writing of the New Testament page by page no human author of Scripture is ever named, and so the stress of the epistle rests upon the fact that this is a message from the Lord God to us. Now you know messages are important to some extent in the way, or by the degree, to which we honor the messenger. Now someone who has no dignity, no position, no

knowledge speaks to us we pay him a certain amount of attention, but if a person is an expert or if a person is highly regarded or if a person has great dignity or great position then we pay attention to what they say to that degree.

Now if this is really the voice of God to us, how significant should these words be to us? It is an epistle that is wonderfully relevant to a church that is living in Standstillville, contented, and snug in salvation. The evangelical church knows no doubt very little of the heavenly life that the Lord Jesus came to bring. The drives of the flesh are very strong in the evangelical church. The power of the world is very strong in the evangelical church. The strategies of the devil are very clever and have lulled us into a comfortable but crippling kind of slumber, the kind of slumber that makes us satisfied with superficial things in spiritual life and what we need more than anything else is to know him who is the message of God better.

Now this is the Christmas season, and in that little clause, "Late in Time Behold Him Come," we have a kind of epitome of these verses. "Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see; hail the incarnate Deity, Pleas'd as man with men to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel, Hark the herald angels sing, 'Glory to the new born King.'" I think the author of this epistle would have loved that hymn because that's what he does right here. He sings of the glory of the king.

Now the opening words speak of the final revelation. It's a kind of sonorous rhetorical sentence, what the Greeks call the period. It's a classical period. It's a sentence that is worthy of a scriptural Demosthenes. As one of the commentators has said, "A great thought demanded a great dress." And this epistle begins with a great dress for great thoughts. He says, "God, who at sundry times," that is "in many parts." I think he speaks there of the fact that God has spoken by Moses the historian and the prophet. He has spoken by the prophets. He's spoken by priests. He's spoken by kings. He's spoken by Psalmists. He's spoken by ordinary farmers in the word of God. And he has spoken in many ways in diverse manners. He has spoken in prophecies, in events, in institutions

like the tabernacle. He has spoken in dreams such as Daniel received and others. He has spoken in visions. In many parts, "At sundry times and in divers manners (God) spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." In other words, the revelation was "partial and piecemeal" in one sense. As the time went by there was an addition here then an addition here, and then another here, and they were differing all along.

The prophets were generally men who had one theme, and consequently they proclaimed their theme. Amos, for example, is "a cry for social justice." He would have been perhaps the greatest of the prophets in the 20th century for his "cry for social justice" is something that is very popular today. There are lots of people who talk about social justice today, and they like for others, of course to be responsible for it, but they're crying a great deal about social justice. Amos, he would have been popular today. He would have been the "in prophet" today, no doubt. Isaiah was a prophet who grasped the holiness of God. He would be very unpopular today. They wouldn't want to listen to Isaiah because he talks about holiness. Hosea because of his bitter home experience is the prophet of the forgiving love of God. He would have been popular today too because we like to think of the love of God, and we like to deemphasize the justice of God. Each prophet out of his own experience attaches himself to part of the truth of God but not the whole of the truth. And so they give forth a fragment of the whole of the truth.

I grew up in Charleston, South Carolina. I can still remember lying on my bed at night, occasionally waking up and listening to the clock on St. Michael's or St. Phillip's Church. St. Michael's was nearer my home and so I would here the clock. Such as is heard today in many of the villages in Europe. And those clocks strike on the hour, and they strike on the fifteen minutes on the quarter hours. And there will be on strike at fifteen minutes after two, at the half hour three, at the quarter 'til hour then four and then they would strike the hour. And if you awaken during the night and you heard the clock strike once well you wouldn't know if it was fifteen minutes after one, or fifteen minutes

after two, or fifteen minutes after three, or fifteen minutes after four, you would know it was fifteen minutes after something. And so you would have to wait to know where you were. You would never know where you were until finally the clock struck the hour then you could say, "Ah, it's two o'clock," or "It's three o'clock." I thought it was five. Well the prophets were like that. They were men who in response to the revelation of God gave forth what they had. They studied the Scriptures. They did not really know where they were because, of course, God's clock of divine revelation was still striking. And so they never knew. They listened, and they constantly listened, and they knew that time was moving toward the completion of the program of God, but they never knew exactly where they were. They were like men listening to the sound of a clock. But finally God spoke in the Son. Now we know where we are.

Isn't it interesting that in the Bible it is said concerning the Lord Jesus that, "His voice is as the voice of many waters" in that great vision of revelation chapter 1. "His voice is as the voice of many waters." The reference of course is to the power and strength and omnipotence of the voice of God, but as you think about it, it is the product of many different waters, plural. I always think of Niagara because to me that's the greatest expression of the force of water and the power of water that I have ever seen, to stand by Niagara Falls. One is impressed immediately with the force of the water that flows over those falls. But that water has as its source little rivulets, little streams, little brooks, finally some rivers that flow into the great Niagara River and finally make its way over there with all of that noise. It's really the noise of many waters, and our Lord's voice is "as the voice of many waters," because all of the prophets combine, all of the message of the Psalmist, all of Moses revelation, all of the revelation of God finally meets in God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. God has spoken to us in his Son. It's a Son wise revelation. It's not a revelation in a book. It's not a revelation in an institution. It's not a revelation in a system like the Levitical cultus, but it's a revelation in such a person as a divine Son.

Now it's important that our Lord be recognized as the divine Son because we could never know that we have a message from God if God himself had not come. That's why we have to have an incarnation. Even in Isaiah or a Moses or a David speaking with all of the truth that they gave us would nevertheless inevitably raise the question how can we really know that they are speaking the voice of God to us. We must have ultimately a message from God himself. And that is what we have in Jesus Christ. That's why he came so that we could have a message from God himself. So he has spoken to us in his Son. He did not delegate someone to come. He did not depute someone to come, but he came himself, and God has spoken in him.

Now these statements that follow are expositions of what it means to have spoken in his Son. There are seven great facts that elucidate the greatness of the revelation of the Son. I'll run briefly through them each one of them could sustain an entire message. But you will notice that we move from the glory of eternity past on through the incarnation to the majesty of the one who has finished his work, and so what we have here is something that surveys the whole of time and even beyond time in the past and on into the future.

The first thing he says about the Son is that he has been appointed heir of all things. Now in the light of the position at the head of this list of things and at the light of the temporal sequence here it seems most likely that this is a reference to his eternal heirship which is grounded in the eternal Sonship of the Lord because in the final analysis it's only a member of the family who can inherit. Now a person can be remembered in a will. That's a nice thing isn't it? Nice to be remembered in somebody's will. I was remembered in a will once from someone who was not in my family. Dr. Chafer when he died had in his will that a thousand dollars should be given to every member of the faculty of Dallas Seminary the moment he died. So every one of us who were on the faculty at the time was remembered by Dr. Chafer and I received a bequest of a thousand dollars from him. But only the member of a family is really an heir. Now when it says

here he's been appointed heir of all things, it's a suggestion of the fact that he is truly the Son of God. He's related by nature to the eternal God.

The second thing that is said about him is that he made the ages. "By whom also he made the ages." That is the Father made the ages through the Son. It is the son who is responsible for the divisions of time as seen in the unfolding of the divine revelation. In other words, he's the Lord of history. And being the Lord of history the Lord Jesus is able to give us an infallible interpretation of what has happened in the past. When he said, for example, "All the prophets were until John," he was telling the people of his day that there was a significant change in the ministry of the Lord God when John the Baptist came along. He was giving us an interpretation of what was happening. "All the prophets were until John," but John comes as the ambassador of the king. So, he's the Lord of history. He's the manager of the universe and is able therefore to give us an authoritative interpretation of it.

The third thing that is said about him is that he is the brightness of his glory. Now this is a magnificent expression. It's the language of Alexandria, philosophical Alexandria, but the truth is something that Alexandrians didn't know anything about. It really is an attempt to express in borrowed terms unborrowed truth. He flashes for the glory of God. He's the brightness of the glory of God. That is when you look at Jesus Christ you see the glory of God flashing forth. Now, that in itself is a testimony to the deity of the Son of God because no one can flash forth the glory of God who is not within his inmost being God himself. So he's the brightness of the glory of God. The luminous image of God, he is the true light as we read in John chapter 1.

Now, the next expression is one that follows in the same line except here the reference is toward the inner man. He says, "And he is the express image of his person." He's the exact replica of his essence. That is the exposition of that expression. In other words, if the first, the one previous, is an expression of the true deity of the Son of God looked at outwardly, this is a reference to his true deity expressed inwardly.

One day the Lord Jesus after a busy ministry asked the disciples to get into a boat and go over to the other side of the lake, and he himself was very tired and so he entered into the boat and he quickly fell asleep in the stern of the boat. As they were making their way across that little Sea of Galilee a very intense storm arose, so much so that even the fisherman who were very familiar with it were very much afraid. They came to him, awakened him from his sleep and said, "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" He arose and rebuked the wind. Evidently he regarded it as a satanic attempt to deter him in his ministry. "He rebuked the wind and said unto the sea, 'Peace be still,' and the wind ceased and there was a great calm." And he looked at them and said, "Why are you so fearful; how is it that you have no faith?" By the way well I'll say a word about that in a moment. He said, "How is it that you have no faith? They feared exceedingly and said one to another what manner of man is this that even the wind and sea obey him?" why if they had known the truth that is expressed by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the 1st chapter here that we're looking at, they would have said, "It's no wonder that he's able to speak to the winds and waves and have them obey him because he is the brightness of his glory and the express image of his essence and so of course he can speak to the winds and waves and have them obey him." Well they might have even known that by the Old Testament Scriptures too.

When I left this morning and went outside in the hall one of the men came up to me and said, "Dr. Johnson, it's true that if they had known what Hebrews 1 said they could have said that, but if they had known what Psalm 89 said they would have been able to say that they understood it too because there it says in verses 8 and 9, 'Oh Lord God of hosts who is a strong Lord like unto Thee or to Thy faithfulness round about Thee. Thy rulest the raging of the sea when the waves thereof arise Thou stillest them'." It was no surprise that the Lord Jesus was able to speak to winds and waves and have them obey him. He is truly the Son of God.

Now there are people who say, "My goodness, is this another lesson in theology?" Yes it is. It is because you see in the final analysis it's what we think theologically that really matters. There are people who think that theology is not important. That's their theology. You cannot escape theology. You either have good theology or bad theology. And people who have a dwarf and elfin theology are going to have a dwarf and elfin spiritual life. You never have anything that is not an expression of what you believe, what you think. And so we preach doctrine. We constantly preach doctrine. We constantly preach the great truths of the word of God because it is the great truths of the word of God that will build you up into great Christians.

Listen to what Mr. Warfield said, "We cannot preach at all without preaching doctrine; and the type of religious life which grows up under our preaching will be determined by the nature of the doctrines which we preach." And that's why we are so interested in Believers Chapel in having you learn the great truths of the word of God. It's not simply that you should be able to demonstrate that you are wiser in theology than someone who is a member of a church down the street somewhere. It's that your spiritual life may be great and grounded in the truths of the word of God because in the final analysis your religious life, your spiritual life will be determined by the truth upon which you have fed. These are great truths here, and the Lord Jesus is set forth as the eternal God. It would take a virtuoso in exegetical evasion to avoid the force of these words in their attribution of glory to the Son of God.

Now he says, "He upholds all things by the word of his power." I love that expression because we're inclined to think what this means is that the Lord Jesus is kind of like an atlas and he has the world on his shoulders, and he's just kind of like this, you know just about to collapse, but he is able to make it. "He upholds all things by the word of his power." But the word "uphold" is really a word that means simply to bear, and it means to bear along toward a goal. It's the word that is used to translate Moses' expression in the Old Testament when he speaks about the difficulty of guiding this

rebellious nation Israel, "Lord, how can I possibly bear these people?" He's their leader taking them to the Promised Land, and he's complaining about the difficulty of leading them. That's the word that is used here. "He upholds all things by the word of his power" in the sense that he is the one who is governing the universe and guiding it toward that magnificent climax when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ and he reigns forever and ever. "He upholds all things by the word of his power." So he's not only the Lord of history and interprets the past, but he is the Lord of prophesy and gives us a sure insight into what is going to happen in the future. He does that in Matthew chapter 24 and 25 for example, in the great Olivet discourse, and so he's not an arrogant diviner like a Jean Dixon. He's not a groping philosopher like a Vitgenstein or whoever else may be popular at the moment. He's not a hazy eyed prophet. He's not even a Bible teacher who is seeking to guess what's going to happen by the signs of the times and who tells us that this year may be the year, but he's the Son of God and he speaks with authority, and his words are true. "He upholds all things." He's moving us along toward a certain conclusion, the architect of the universe, the builder of the universe, the sustainer of the universe, the governor of the universe.

Now all of this, of course is useless information if we don't know him as the one through whom we have the forgiveness of sins. And so our author says in his sixth expression of truth, "When he had by himself purged our sins." Now he's not talking specifically about our own sins, but he's talking about sin. He has purged sin. He has made a cleansing of sin. But the point that I want to make is that he is saying that we must know him as redeemer or all of this preceding knowledge is futile knowledge. It would be futile to know him as the Son of God and not know him as the one through whom we have redemption. It would be futile to know him as deity, as the governor of the universe, if we did not know that we ourselves have the forgiveness of sins by virtue

of our relationship to him. And notice it is by himself that he has made purging of sins. It is a work that is solely the work of the Son of God.

There is a great religious organization that tells us that original sin is removed by the waters of baptism, that daily sin is removed by the non-bloody sacrifice of the mass. The Council of Trent has written, "Let him be a cursed who saith that sins are not removed by the non-bloody sacrifice of the mass." Venial sins are removed by the oil of extreme unction and other sins by purgatory. The only purgatory that the Bible speaks about is this purgatory, "When he had by himself purged our sins." What's left for the cross of Christ? If water, oil, bread, and fire remove sins, what does the blood of Christ do? If so much is done by works, little is done by grace. But the Bible says we are saved by grace through faith. "When he had by himself purged our sins."

And the last is the climatic statement, "He sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." That's the climax. That's the formal assumption of authority after sin has been dealt with. The priests of the Old Testament were constantly about their business never sitting down in the tabernacle, but he has sat down. The work is finished. it is complete. The atonement has been accomplished. We have a transcendent person, and we have a transcendent work, and the two make for the transcendent finality of Christianity.

Isn't it interesting that the two adjectives in the Epistle to the Hebrews that occur so frequently stress this. We read, for example, of things that are better, "The Lord is better than the angels." He's, of course, better than angels. "Through him we have a better hope," and various other types of things are called better, "Better covenant." Now the meaning of that is that the New Testament covenant is a greater covenant than the Old Testament covenant and the redemption that he has accomplished is superior than the Old Testament revelation.

Now there is another adjective that he uses and it's the adjective eternal. Now we could conceive of something that's better than the old covenant. Itself being bettered in

the future, but when it is said concerning the new covenant truth, the eternal covenant, the eternal redemption, eternal priesthood, when it is said that it is eternal why that is to say that there is nothing to come that will be better than that? And so what we have is that which is better than the Old Testament revelation and it itself is the final revelation and so we have in Jesus Christ and the work that he has accomplished the transcendent finality of Christianity in the incomparable work of the Son of God.

Now he concludes by saying he's got a better name. Of course he's got a better name. "Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." They're name is the name of messenger. His name is the name of the Son of God.

Speech is the vehicle of fellowship. If I walk down here after the meeting, there are people who will greet me and say, "Good morning." Well that is a measure of fellowship. If they avoid me, well I get a little message there too, but it's much better to hear the other kind of message. Speech is the vehicle of fellowship, and so when we read here that God has spoken in his Son it's an expression of fellowship. It indicates that God believes that we are capable of fellowship and as a matter of fact it indicates that he longs to have fellowship with us. The words of God, who can express how much they ought to mean to us?

Hazlett speaks of some who could translate a word into ten languages but didn't really know what the thing itself signified in any language. There are Bible students like that. They read the Bible and they're thinking about little technical things and they never really thought about the fact that God has spoken and what it means for him to speak to us. He's been trying to catch our ear down through the centuries. He said, for example, "This is my beloved Son, hear him," pay attention to him. May the message concerning the Son come home to you. Listen to him. It's the word of God. It's God's word in the Son.

The words of a man carry weight according to the idea that I have of his wisdom, his veracity, his power, his love. How much ought the words of God, how much weight ought they to carry with us? You notice it also speaks of the divine initiative too. God has spoken. We didn't say, "Oh God speak to us." We weren't even interested in him speaking to us. He has spoken to us. He has stooped in love to our frailty, to our darkness, and to our sin.

Claude Montefiore was a Jewish man and a scholar, biblical scholar. He said that he set himself to read the gospels concerning the Lord Jesus to see if there was anything in them that was something that a Jewish prophet or a rabbi had never said before, and when he finished reading he said there is one thing that's quite distinctive about Christianity. He said it's the picture of the divine shepherd going out into the wilderness to seek lost sheep. The picture of a God as not merely welcoming or receiving those who turn to him but as taking the initiative in seeking those who have not turned to him, that's a new figure. That's one of the new excellencies of the gospel. Now he thought he had discovered that kind of God, but of course the Bible teaches that kind of God right from the beginning. It is a God who has spoken and who seeks us in his voice that he may have fellowship with us.

Ignatius was one of the earliest of the church fathers after the days of the apostles, and he wrote a letter to the Magnesians, and in this letter he speaks of Christ as the word of God. He says, "Jesus Christ who is the word of God which came forth out of silence." Now the idea of silence as representative of God originated with Judaism. It was linked with Genesis chapter 1 and verse 3. "And God said, 'Let there be light'." There was silence and darkness until then. So the rabbi's ask, "What was there before God spoke?" And the answer that was to be given was God's silence. So it became a token of the inexpressible majesty of God, his silence. But the Christian message is God is no longer silent. He has spoken out of his silence. And furthermore he himself has come with the message of the forgiveness of sins through the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you're here this morning and you have never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, God has spoken in his Son, a Son who has purged sin has made it possible for men to have the forgiveness of sins. If you have by Thy grace of God the Holy Spirit come to recognize that you are a sinner, Christ died for sinners. He has died for you if you have come to understand your sin and desire the forgiveness of sins. May God speak to your heart. May you recognize your lost condition. May you sense that there is no salvation in anything else, church, good works, education, culture. There is salvation only in the Son of God who said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me." May you flee to the cross. Don't waste another moment. Flee to the cross. Acknowledge your sin. Receive as a free gift eternal life and rejoice in the forgiveness of sins. Begin your conversation with God this morning. He's spoken. He waits for a response. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] We are overwhelmed Lord to think that Thou hast spoken to us, so unworthy, so rebellious, so guilty, so deeply condemned. We marvel at the love that gave the Son. We desire Lord to cast our selves at the feet of our savior and serve him forever. Oh, God if there are some in this audience who have never come to Christ, at this very moment, move in their hearts. Give them the knowledge of themselves, the knowledge of the son, and may they respond and begin their conversation with Thee which continues throughout all...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]