



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Hebrews 1:7–9

“The Majesty of the King”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the ministry of the word of God, which has meant so much to us in years past and we thank Thee for the ever-living character of the word of God because it comes from our great living God. And we thank Thee that through the reading and study of it, we are built up in our faith and strengthened. And, enable, Lord, in the life that Thou hast given us to live to know where we may find the help and strength and encouragement and deliverance that we need. We thank Thee for the Scriptures, we thank Thee for Him of whom they speak, primarily, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and we ask that our time together this evening may exalt Him and bring glory to our triune God.

And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight, for the Scripture reading, I'd like to turn to the 45th Psalm, and read that psalm and then we'll read the passage that's we'll look at in Hebrews chapter 1.

Now, for those of you who are reading through the Bible, this will count, and so when you get to Psalm 45, just skip over it because you've read it. I want you to know that I've, tonight, I'm finishing Genesis and going into Exodus, and I hate to do that because when I came in the other day and told Martha, that I was almost through Genesis, she said, “You're bragging.” [Laughter] And so, I guess I was. I admitted that I was, a little bit. But I am trying to read through the Bible this

year and I’m already finding it very, very interesting. I have to be out of town some Sundays this month and I was wondering about what I should speak on. But reading through the Book of Genesis, the Lord used it to bring my attention again to the life of Jacob and so I’m going to give a series of studies on the life of Jacob, where I’m preaching out of town.

Anyway, I hope you found Psalm 45, and let’s read through the psalm and, of course, you probably know that this is the psalm that our author cites in the section that we’re going to look at. The Psalmist writes, and I think it’s interesting to note the superscription of it. It’s called “A Song of Love” or loves. But the kind of love is not simply marital love; it is a holy marital love. And that will come out, of course, as we go through it.

“My heart is overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the King; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. You are fairer than the sons of men; Grace is poured upon your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever. Gird your sword upon your thigh, O Mighty One, with your glory and your majesty. And in your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness; and your right hand shall teach you awesome things. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies; the peoples fall under you. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness more than your companions. All your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes and cassia, Out of the ivory palaces, by which they have made you glad. Kings’ daughters are among your honorable women; At your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir. Listen, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your own people also, and your father’s house; so the King will greatly desire your beauty; because He is your Lord, worship Him. And the daughter of Tyre will come with a gift; the rich among the people will seek your favor. The royal daughter is all glorious within the palace; her clothing is woven with gold. She shall be brought to the King in robes of many colors; the virgins, her companions who follow her, shall be brought to you. With gladness and rejoicing they shall be

brought; they shall enter the King’s palace. Instead of your fathers shall be your sons, whom you shall make princes in all the earth I will make your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore the people shall praise you forever and ever.

And now, let’s turn over to our passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and we’ll read verse 7 through verse 9 of chapter 1. The author, as you remember, is giving a series of texts and we’re going to read the fourth and fifth of them here in verse 7 and 8.

“And of the angels He says, “Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire.” But to the Son He says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.”

Well, I’m sure that you, most of you if not all of you in this auditorium, know that the majesty of Jesus Christ is really the theme of the Bible. We have this expressed in so many places. We have this expressed in so many places. We have it expressed by our Lord Jesus, himself, when on the Emmaus road at the end of his earthly appearances in resurrection, he speaks to the disciples who are with him and says, “O foolish ones and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken, ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?” And, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. And then, over in John chapter 5 in verse 39, our Lord also says to the Jewish people to whom he was speaking, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life. And these are they which testify of me.”

So when we say the majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ is the theme of the Bible, we’re saying something that any Christian, I’m sure, would agree with. But it’s also the theme of this epistle. In fact, it’s the central fact of all of history; the Lord Jesus, the theme of God’s word to us. And yet, as

we said in one of our earlier studies just a few weeks ago, it’s surprising isn’t it, that he probably is the most ignored man of our time. Read the newspapers, what do you find about the central figure of the divine revelation? Very little. And usually what you find is wrong, theologically, listen to the radio, look at your television screen, read your newspapers, read your magazines that you receive, listen to the conversations of the people about you and the most significant person in human existence, for he is the God-man, is the man who is largely ignored by our society. Unfortunately, ignored by a lot of us as well.

When I was in Europe, living thirty years ago, I read Life Magazine, the International Life, and it was a very interesting article in March of nineteen sixty, in which the author was speaking about science’s explosive advances and concluded that in the light of the breakthroughs that had been taking place in science, that some people at that time, thirty years ago, were speaking of man as a Man-god. Well, what would we say of this after thirty years? Well, we say that if anyone should speak of man as a Man-god, if he knows anything about the divine revelation, he would have to say, that idea is absolutely ridiculous. Hebrews, on the other hand, reveals something even more astounding than that man should become a Man-god because Hebrews underlines the great fact of the divine revelation. It speaks of the God who became man. Now, this quotation that we just read from Psalm 45, states plainly with reference to the Son of God. “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.” One of those magnificent attributions of deity to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, we’ve been saying in the few lessons that we’ve undertaken so far, that the author of the epistle by a remarkable series of contrasts, you know them by now, he is contrasting our Lord with the angels, speaking of how much better he is than the angels. He will contrast our Lord with Moses and show that he is a far more significant mediator than Moses ever was. And then, he will devote the major portion of the epistle to the greatness of the Son of God in comparison with Aaron, the High Priest of Israel. And, in fact, the doctrinal section of the epistle will conclude, largely, with that. So that will be the third of the great contrasts. So he is seeking by a series of contrasts to show the superiority of the Son of God, the Great Mediator, the One Mediator between

God and Man, how much greater he is than other men who have served in a smaller way in the task of mediation. For the angels did that. They gave the law. He will point out. Moses acted as a mediator, too. And then, of course, the priesthood was the divinely determined mediation for the children of Israel.

Now, to the angels, the first of the seven texts refer in this contrast. And so we looked last time at the first, the second, and the third of the citations, which our author has drawn from the Bible to show the greatness of the Son. He pointed out that He’s a Son of God, he pointed out that in 2 Samuel 7, the text that reads, “I will be to him a Father and He shall be to me a Son,” confirmed that. And then, in verse 6, we concluded with this citation from Deuteronomy chapter 32 in verse 43, which he introduces by saying, “And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, ‘Let all the angels of God worship Him.’”

Now, I tried to point out because there are editions of the Bible that translate that verse this way, “And again, when He brings the firstborn into the world,” which, conceivably, could refer to the incarnation. It could even refer to the resurrection. But in the light of the fact that the “again,” I pointed out or tried to point out, probably goes with the verb, that we are looking at a text that has to do, ultimately, not with the first coming of our Lord or the resurrection but to the Second Coming of our Lord. Now, my translation translates it that way, which indicates that the translators agreed with the interpretation that I’m suggesting. So, read it again. “But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, ‘Let all the angels of God worship Him.’”

Now, what he’s trying to show, of course, is that at the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus, the text of Deuteronomy 32, which calls upon the angels to worship that being referred to there, if the angels worship that being, then that being is greater than the angels. That should be obvious to us.

Now, I’m not sure that I was able to get over too effectively what, precisely, Deuteronomy 32 says, because we got pressed for time near the end, as often happens with preachers. This particular passage, Deuteronomy chapter 32, we pointed out, was something of a summary of the

history of Israel and it's one of the remarkable Old Testament prophetic passages. I referred specifically to verse 39 of it. Deuteronomy 32:39, which reads, “Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand.” Now, there's no question but that that text refers to the Eternal God in Heaven. I pointed out or tried to point out that the term Yahweh in the Old Testament by “Lord” often in the King James Version, usually in the King James Version with capital “L” capital “O”, capital “R” capital “D.” A reference to the covenant keeping God of the Old Testament, who led the children of Israel out and brought them into the land. He is called, by scholars, Yahweh. Jehovah is the old name that the King James Version used.

Frequently, Christians think of Jehovah as simply a term that refers to God the Father. But I tried to point out that that term is a term that refers to God, the One God, in his being, and therefore, it's a term that applies to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In other words, there is a Yahweh the Father, a Yahweh the Son, and a Yahweh the Spirit. Now, all we know here, in Deuteronomy 32:39, is that he is Yahweh. “Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand.”

But now, we go on to read, in a few verses here and it becomes evident that this Yahweh is going to intervene in human society. Now, we know enough about Yahweh the Father that he does not have a body, never shall have a body, and that he does not personally intervene in our history in the sense of coming down into our midst. He is, of course, in one sense, right here with us, right here where I am. But he is the Father, who is a spirit.

But now, we read here, we go on.

“For I raise My hand to heaven, and say, ‘As I live forever, if I whet My glittering sword, and My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies, and repay those who hate Me. I will make My arrows drunk with blood, and My sword shall devour flesh, with the blood of

the slain and the captives, from the heads of the leaders of the enemy.’ Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, And render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and for His people.”

In other words, the Yahweh of Deuteronomy 32 is the Yahweh who intervenes in human society, in judgment. Now, we know that that is a reference to the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, without the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we would probably agree with his interpretation if we thought theologically about it. But he’s settled the matter for us, for he says, verse 6, “When He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, ‘Let all the angels of God worship Him.’” “The firstborn?” Well, that’s a reference to our Lord Jesus Christ. And, “When He brings the firstborn into the world, He calls on all the angels of God to worship Him,” that is, the second person of the Trinity. So our author understands that and he understands that the Yahweh, who speaks in Deuteronomy 32, is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is the one who comes in judgment.

Now, we talked about that. I hope we made the point. And this text is translated properly, “When He shall again bring the firstborn into the world, He says, ‘Let all the angels of God worship Him.’”

Now, the next two citations are citations that go with each other in the sense that they are contrasted with one another in this great contrast between the Son and the angels. He says, in verse 7, “And of the angels He says, ‘Who makes His angels’ spirits and His ministers a flame of fire.’” But, very simply, what he says is that the angels are servants and in their work are changeable under the hand of God, without a change in their essence, of course, but they are servants who carry out specific tasks for the Lord God. “He makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire.”

There is a very nice paragraph written by one of the older commentators on this particular thing, and I think I’ll read it to you because it says very plainly what our author is talking about. He says, two things our author expresses, “first, the service of the angels, and second their alliance in this

service to the material elements under God’s transforming hand. Under His hand they suffer a change into winds and a flame of fire. This idea is not to be pressed so far as to imply that the angelic essence undergoes a transformation into material substance, but only that the angels are clothed with this material form and in their service assume the shape of men. Illustrations of this, from the rabbinical writers are not wanting.” This is one of the quotes. “The Angel said unto Mennor, ‘Know not after what image I am made, for God changes us every hour. Why, therefore, dost thou ask after my name? Sometimes he makes us fire, at other time, wind, sometimes men, at other time again angels.’”

You know, you’re reading the Bible and you notice this in my reading of the Book of Genesis, and I’m ready to go into Exodus now, you understand, but I remember in Genesis chapter 18, Abram met three angels, it is said. And they came and talked with him. One of them, it turns out, is God, himself. But the other two are angels; they serve a specific purpose. So here, “sometimes he makes us fire, at other times wind, sometimes men, at other times again angels.”

God is named God of Hosts because He does with his angels as he pleases. He makes them sometimes sitting, Judges 6, sometimes standing, Isaiah 6, sometimes to resemble women, Zachariah 5, sometimes men, Genesis 18:2; that is, the second verse. When his angels are set forth as messengers, they are made winds. When they minister before the throne of his glory, they are flames of fire.”

Now, the reason he cites this is not so much to labor that point. He wants to say something in verse 14. “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?” But, here, he wants to contrast these changeable, mutable, ephemeral beings with the eternal, immutable Son of God. Notice verses 8 and 9, “But to the Son,” that is, over against the angels, “But to the Son He says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.’” In other words, the primary point is that the angels are unstable. They may be reduced to wind; they may be reduced to fire. They are menial; they serve the saints. But the Son is royal, he is immutable, and he is divine. And that’s very interesting, because he is set up in verse 4, “having become so much better than the

angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” When we talked about that in our first study, I mentioned the fact that the name is, fundamentally, in this particular section, the name of the Son of God; that is, he is one who has the being of God, the Son of God. That’s why the Lord Jesus is called the Son of God. He bears God’s nature wherever he is.

Now, we’ve already seen to this point that he is called Son, we see from this particular quotation, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.” That he is divine. He’s addressed as, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.” And, furthermore, we see as over against the angels that he is immutable.

So already, the name, this more excellent name, that this author attaches to our Lord Jesus Christ may be said to be the name of God, the name of the Son of God, the Divine Son, the Eternal Son; all of these things apply to Him. No wonder, he says, that the Son of God has a more excellent name than the angels. He’s not through. He’s going to underline this and add to it in the other quotations, also. But, you can see the greatness of the name of the Son of God, who is royal, divine, immutable. So the ephemeral, evanescent angels cannot stand comparison with the ever-present, abiding Son, whose anointing, even, is superior to their angelic anointing. You’ll notice, he says in verse 9, “Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.”

Now, our passage that we are reading here is very simple, isn’t it? Just look at that verse, verse 8, “But to the Son He says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.’” Well, if I were to ask you the question, does this text say that Jesus Christ is God, what would you say? Why, you would say, wouldn’t you, you would say, “Why, certainly, he is God.” It says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.”

Now, if you are reading the Authorized Version or if you’re reading the New King James Version, which I’m reading not because, I think, it’s the best translation; I’ve told you that enough times so I don’t have to tell you that anymore, but if you’re reading other translations, for example, if you are reading the Revised Standard Version; this text reads, “Your divine throne endures forever

and ever.” Well, that would raise a question. “Your divine throne endures forever and ever,” well, if that’s a reference to the Son of God, it may be simply a statement that the throne that he has is an eternal throne. But “He” would not be the eternal God, necessarily. Or, at least, there’d be quite a bit of argument.

The New Revised Standard Version has come to better sense and so it reads, “Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever.” That’s very interesting. I happen to know the person, personally, who supervised the translation of the New Revised Standard Version; and he is an evangelical Christian man. And, evidently, he and perhaps some others of the translators had some influence. And the New Revised Standard Version reads, I think, true to the Hebrew text. “Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever.”

Now, the New English Bible, which a lot of people like, reads, “Your throne is like God’s throne.” And again, you can see that the translators did not think that this was a text that said that Jesus Christ was God. “Your throne is like God’s throne.” But, it’s not God’s throne.

What’s the problem? Well, the problem is that the word, *theos*, from theocratic and other things you know that means God, this word may be vocative or it may be nominative. Now, normally, *theos* is nominative; that is, it’s the subject of a sentence or it could be a predicate noun, but, nevertheless, it’s a nominative term. A vocative, as this appears to be, “Your throne, O God,” would normally be, *thea*, but this is *theos*. And so, if you are not interested in attributing deity to the Lord Jesus Christ, and you’re looking for a good reason not to, you would say, “This is not the vocative and it shouldn’t be translated, ‘Your throne, O God.’” Well, I have to admit that it is in form, not the vocative form. However, there are illustrations in the New Testament of *theos* as a vocative. And so you cannot say that since this is *theos*, it cannot be vocative. Now, there are many reasons, I think, or at least some significant reasons to take this as a vocative in this case. So I’m taking it that way. But you’ll understand why, if you read something else, you might find something different. There are many other reasons, however, why this must be a reference to the Lord God. For, he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.”

Now, in the Old Testament, who, to whom, is promised an eternal throne? To whom is promised an eternal throne? Come on? David! Right! David is promised an eternal throne; David’s son the Scripture tells us will have that eternal throne. Now, who can possibly sit on an eternal throne who is not eternal? And we’ve gone through this. There’s no reason to go through it anymore. I’m just reminding you of it; that David’s seed must, ultimately, run out in someone who is eternal if David’s son is to inherit the divine kingdom promised to him, an eternal kingdom, an eternal throne, eternal kingdom, more than once.

So when we read here, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness.” I feel perfectly free in the light of the fact that this paragraph has a number of references to the Davidic throne and the Davidic kingdom; these texts in 2 Samuel 7, and Psalm 2, and this one, too, for that matter, to take this as a reference to Yahweh the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. “But to the Son He says, ‘Your Son, O God.’” And to the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, this will sound so silly to say this has interpreted it correctly. [Laughter]

I used to like to say to my students, “Who do you think really understands the Old Testament Scriptures the best, modern commentators or the apostles and our Lord?” Well, the students, of course, would want to argue that modern commentators did, but that, in effect, is what we often do. So in this case, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews applies this text, “Your throne, O God,” to the Son of God. And, further, he goes on down in verse 9 and says, “Therefore God, Your God,” Now, how could God have a God? If this is a reference to God the Father, who would be His God? Therefore, “God, Your God,” don’t you see this can only be a reference to our Lord because only He, the God-man, may have a God, being the God-man, which, of course, he acknowledged in his incarnation; and, under whom he still serves as a mediator. Not until the day when he turns the kingdom over to the Father, that the God may be all in all is that mediatorial relationship changed. So this then is a text that has to do with the Son of God. And since his throne is eternal, what throne must this be? It can only be, what throne? David’s throne, right. It can only be David’s throne. “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.” This is the eternal throne promised.

We have reference to it in verse 5. “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.” Verse 5, also, “I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son.” In the giving of the Davidic Covenant and the promise of the Davidic throne. So, since his throne is eternal, this must be David’s throne that is in view.

Now, what then is the name that is greater than the name of the angels? Son, Yahweh, God. It accents the saving power of the Lord Jesus Christ. No wonder, our author said in verse 4: “...having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name.” Son! God! Yahweh! Why, he can do all of his will. It accents, don’t you see the point, it accents his saving power.

Now, what I’d like to do tonight is now to turn back to the Old Testament to Psalm 45, and take a look at this psalm, which for the rest of our study tonight, and see what our author was thinking about when he cited this text, and, perhaps, why he cited this text in seeking to show that the Son is greater than the angels.

Psalm 45 is said by the superscription to be a contemplation of the sons of Korah, a song of love. Marital love but, holy marital love, is the point. It’s an epithalamium, that is, a song that has to do with a marriage. And, I think, you’ll also note, if you read through this psalm with me and study it for a few moments, that you will see that the royal complements, which are paid by the Psalmist to the king, here, are taken in the New Testament at face value. In other words, what this man says about the king, and the great things that he does say here about him, are things that the New Testament authors take at their full value. That tells us a great deal of how the New Testament writers regarded the Old Testament.

Now, the dazzling splendor of this occasion, this royal marriage occasion and its words are only suitable for a divine, Davidic king. Now, David’s not mentioned, but the eternal throne is mentioned; and the context in which it is set, by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, with those Davidic passages, would enable us to say that the words of Psalm 45 have to do with the divine Davidic king.

Scholars like to ask the question, well, what was the occasion of Psalm 45? Well, there have been a number of occasions that have been suggested. No one answer has commanded the conviction of the majority of the scholars. As a matter of fact, we don't really know definitely anything more about it today than we did five hundred or a thousand years ago. The historical occasion is lost to us. We gather because it's an eternal kingdom or throne that is talked about and the person who is to sit upon it is divine that it has to do with the Davidic throne promises of the Old Testament. And we are taking it that way.

Now, the author begins by saying, “My heart is overflowing with a good theme.” Isn't that interesting? The love psalm begins where all songs that express love should begin. It begins in the heart. “My heart is overflowing with a good theme.” The grand old hymns that we sing in our church services, and we don't sing, in my opinion, nearly enough, and I'm very discouraged by the way in which so many of our churches today are abandoning the singing of the great old hymns, the historic hymns of the Christian faith, the reason is very simple; if you sit and listen to the choruses that are repeated over and over again, they have no theological depth and the very repetition of them discourages any serious thinking about them because by the time you've started to think about it, let's sing it again, let's sing it again. And so, we sing it two or three times. They are little ditties that have very little good sound theology in them.

I've often said this that when Christmastime comes, I look forward to that because even in some of our churches that do sing fairly good hymns, the Christmas hymns are by far the best because they have some solid theology in them. And when one reads those hymns and sings them, they mean something deep down within because that's where a hymn should have its source and origin; in our hearts, theological hearts and spiritual hearts, in our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. So I love the old hymns, and I believe they are the greatest teaching instrument, so far as hymnology is concerned, that we could possibly have. And, in my opinion, we should sing them and keep singing them too. So our author says, “My heart is overflowing with a good theme.” Those grand old hymns which speak so much to the believing friend.

About thirty-five years ago, I was in California and listening to Carl Armerding, he was talking about Psalm 45 and he said, “What is love? A definition of love that has been suggested to me is the pure juice of the heart, squeezed out, for a friend.” I haven’t seen that in any theological work. And then he added, “But, perhaps, it should be maybe it’s squeezed out by a friend.” Well, this particular kind of love that is expressed here is even greater than that. “My heart is overflowing with a good theme,” and it’s love for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the great king who was promised to the author of this hymn. He says, “My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.” He’s filled with the glory of what he’s talking about; the great theme of David’s son and the promises that are related to him. “Grace is poured upon Your lips; therefore God has blessed You, the King, forever.”

I think of the preacher who attended an old fashioned camp meeting and got happy, as they used to say in those days. He shouted his tongue out and his collar down, so Vance Havner said. The next day a friend said, “You don’t feel today like you did yesterday, do you?” He said, “No, but I believe today just like I believed yesterday.” And that’s right, too, isn’t it? To talk about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is something that should come from the heart and it should be coming from the depths of the knowledge of him.

“Therefore God has blessed You forever.” Now, there’s an interesting statement in verse 2. “You are fairer than the sons of men.” That expression, in the original text, is very interesting because it is an expression that’s very unusual. In fact, some students of the Hebrew text have even suggested that this verb, *yaphab*, is a verb that is coined for this special occasion to speak to the fairness and beauty of our Lord. There are some analogies in cognate languages with the Hebrew language, and so we won’t make that point definitely. But it does speak to the unusual beauty that the writer of the hymn sees in the king of whom he speaks; whom we know from the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now, of course, when he says, “You are fairer than the sons of men,” he’s not talking about physical beauty. He is talking about something different. He’s talking about spiritual and moral beauty.

The early Church was divided on the point of the beauty of our Lord. There were some in the early church who thought of our Lord as being repulsive in natural beauty. And there are some statements in the Book of Isaiah in chapter 52, particularly, verse 13 through verse 15, that suggest at least at the time of the cross that he was not a happy spectacle to look at. But these went so far as to say that he was a very repulsive looking individual. They were saying it for spiritual reasons that it accented, of course, of how God thinks so differently from men.

But then, there were others in the Christian church, in the earlier days that thought of him as very beautiful. “The heavenly Father,” says Chrysostom, “poured out on him and full streams that personal beauty which is distilled only drop by drop on mortal man.” Augustine said, “He was beautiful in his mother’s bosom, beautiful in the arms of his parents, beautiful on the cross and beautiful in the sepulcher.” In the 15th Century, a Roman Catholic historian by the name of Nicephorus ventured a fuller sketch. And I thought maybe you might like to hear it. This is the outward appearance of our Lord, as handed down from antiquity, so he suggested. “He was very beautiful. His height was fully seven spans, his hair bright auburn and not too thick, and was inclined to wave in soft curls.” I have one wave back there. [Laughter] I don’t qualify. “His eyebrows were black and arched and his eyes seemed to shed from them a gentle golden light. They were very beautiful. His nose was prominent.” [I qualify there. [Laughter] “His beard lovely but not very long, he wore his hair on the contrary very long, for no scissors had ever touched it, nor any human hand.” [I have some friends that I wonder if any scissors ever touched their hair, but still,] Nor any human had except for his mother, when she played with it in his childhood. He stooped a little but his body was well formed. His complexion was that of ripe brown wheat and his face like his mother’s, rather oval and round with only a little red in it.” How did he know what Mary’s face looked like? “But through it there shone dignity, intelligence of soul, gentleness and a calmness of spirit never disturbed.” All of these, of course, are simply speculative guess, they may be beautiful guesses, but that’s as much as we can say for them.

The physical beauty of our Lord is not the significant thing. It is his moral beauty and if you want to note his moral beauty and the significant kind of beauty that he did possess, then look at him in his birth, in his nativity, in his childhood, in his manhood, in his transfiguration, in his passion. His passion was so remarkable that it drew from the individuals around him, “Behold, this truly was the Son of God,” in his resurrection, in his ascension. The Apostles thought so much of our Lord, evidently, that when he ascended into heaven that they stood looking for so long that the angels had to say, “Why stand ye here gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is you’ve seen go into heaven, is to come a second time, just as you’ve seen him go up there.” What our author is talking about here when he says, “You are fairer than the sons of men,” is, as I say, spiritual and moral beauty.

Now, this psalm, I cannot expound it all, I’d like for you to note that there is a distinct change with verse 3, “Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One, with Your glory and Your majesty, and in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness.” Only a change in the age could account for this change of mood, and so, those verses and those statements refer, no doubt to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. “And Your right hand shall teach You awesome things, your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies; the peoples fall under You.”

And then, verse 6, the conflict is over, the enemies of him are the footstool of his feet. He’s sitting on the Davidic throne, now, in the fullness of that experience, and we read, “Your throne, O God,” this is the one of whom he’s been speaking, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.” The eternal throne, and, therefore, the Davidic throne. And sitting on the throne, that eternal throne, is our eternal king, there’s no worry about who may, if any, succeed him. Already, we are worrying. We are worrying that, perhaps, Albert will succeed Bill. We don’t have to, in divine things, worry about who’s going to succeed the king. The Lord, Jesus Christ, when he ascends his throne, it’s an eternal throne, our future is settled forever. How magnificent! We’ll never find that comfort and assurance in human life, but there, yes. “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of

righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your angelic companions.”

The remainder of this particular psalm is a psalm in which the psalmist calls upon the individuals associated with the king to worship him, essentially. There are the figures of an ancient marriage in which the individual who is the groom, incidentally, this is an interesting psalm, because the who's the prominent one? The bride? No, the groom is. There is a time when we have some significance at a wedding. This groom is the center of attention. At any rate, you know in the ancient marriages at the point when the marriage was to be consummated, the groom with his companions went to the brides house and she, with her companions, and the two of them then go to their marriage home where they have a great feast, a marriage feast, and begin their life together. That's the picture here. And so we read of the king's daughters. We read of the queen, reference is apparently to the Gentile nations and to the nation Israel. And, in verse 11, he says, “So the king will greatly desire your beauty; because He is your Lord,” and the queen is called upon to “worship Him.” He cannot endure divided heart. Abandon the house of nativity, the house of sin. She whom he stoops to woo, to wash and to wed is to worship, ultimately.

Now, history has not disappointed the hope of the author of the psalm. He said in verse 17, perhaps I'll read verse 16 too. “Instead of Your fathers shall be Your sons, whom You shall make princes in all the earth. I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations; Therefore the people shall praise You forever and ever.” This is a psalm that has delighted the faithful of the Lord God and, especially, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews for three thousand years and so we can say that history has not disappointed the hope of the author of this hymn, whoever he may ultimately have been.

Let me sum up this, by saying this. This marvelous encomium, this marvelous tribute, to the Son, who is called the Lord, and who is called God, his more excellent name, who is like the

shepherd king of the preceding psalm, Psalm 44, who rescues the slaughtered house of Israel, shouts, my Christian friend, that he can do the same for you.

Some years ago, I was in Canada, preaching at Canadian Fessig Conference, which no longer exists, and when I was there, a man whom I grew to love, Howard Sugden, who still is living and preaching in the Detroit area, told me a story which he, himself, had heard in hearing T. T. Shields, one of the great preachers of the city of Toronto. Mr. Shields was a light for about forty years for the Gospel, downtown in the city of Toronto. A couple of years ago, Martha and I were there and I was able to preach in that church. And I looked around; it was like looking around at First Baptist Church because it was thee church, downtown Toronto. And thinking about all the magnificent things that had happened, the marvelous things, the many people who had been converted to the Lord through this stalwart warrior, T. T. Shields. And, I must say, the Evangelicals loved him. The Roman Catholics hated him because one of the great themes that Mr. Shields sought to present was the fact that the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Sacraments violated the principle of the grace of God and salvation by grace. And he preached it for many years, boldly, over the radio and in that pulpit.

Well, Howard Sugden told me of an interesting illustration that Mr. Shields used when he was preaching the night that he was there. He said, Mr. Shields came to the place in [the] message where he said words like this. “I grew up in Northern Ontario, where they had stone fences around the farms.” If you go north, there in Ontario, now you can still see those rock fences up about like this, one rock after another piled on each other, for their fences. A cheap way to make a fence, I guess. He said, “One afternoon, a group of children were coming along the road after school. Among them, was a crippled boy, dragging himself along with his crutches and trying to keep up. And as the students, the other children from the school, as they came near our farm, the boys began to heckle the cripple.” And he said, “Then they took the boy, the crippled boy, they took his crutches from him and then they pushed him up against the fence, the rock fence, and then they made him stand there. And then they stood off in the road and began to pepper him with stones.”

And he said, “Of course, the boy was hurt as they were throwing rocks at him and then he began to weep and cry. So across the field there was a man, a great big man who was hoeing out in the field and the little boy, hurt and weeping, looked off and saw the man, and shouted out,” Mr. Shields said, “One agonizing cry. And I’m going to try to imitate Mr. Shield.” He said, “Father!” And he said, “The man looked over, recognized the boy, dropped his tools, his hoe, raced to the fence, leapt over the fence, came to the little boy, held him in his arms, went out, picked up the crutches, gave them to him, kissed him. It was his father.” And then, T. T. Shields said to his audience. “I’ve been like that little boy. Satan has been heckling me, then stoning me, and I’ve cried that one word. Father! And he scattered the demons and delivered me.”

Well, you know, when I read a passage like this in which the Psalmist and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says with reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,” and when I realize that this is my Savior, in all of the experiences of life, the Son, the Lord, my God, and my Savior, the cry of ‘Father’ Son, to the Triune God, always receives and answer. May God help us to remember that. Never forget it.

Let’s bow together in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the marvelous tributes that are properly given to the second person of the Trinity by the great author of this epistle. What a marvelous thing is it to have as my own savior one who is God, one who is Lord, one who is an Eternal King, one who is the shepherd of the sheep, and who listens, answers, and always meets their needs as we turn to him and even when we don’t turn to him. We thank Thee, Lord, for the greatness of the Son of God and the marvelous place that we have in the divine thought.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.