

**A Better Ruler**  
**Hebrews 1:10–14**  
**September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Some topics not even Lincoln and Douglas would debate.

When Julie and I were newlyweds, I used to think it was humorous to ask her a series of questions intended to pit two of her exemplary character qualities *against* one another. The first quality is her commitment to truth. In fact, though I've known her for quite a long time, I can't recall a lie coming out of her mouth. The second character quality I'll mention this morning is that she's kind.

Those character qualities—a commitment to truth *and* persistent kindness—can be pretty easily pitted against one another. So, to do so, I'd jokingly ask her a series of questions that would force her to lean one way or the other. For example, I'd pick the funniest friend I had. Knowing that he was the funniest person she knew as well, with a straight face I'd ask my new bride, "Do you think I might be a little funnier than Michael?" It's an insane question. There's an objective right answer. We both knew it. Then I'd pick my most brilliant friend, that she *also* knew well, and I'd ask her, "Do you think I'm better read than Josh?" And I'd just pile these questions up, picking my friend with a record deal, or my friend that played college ball, and ask, "Do you think my album would be better than his, or do you think I could take him on the basketball court?" And time after time her kindness and her commitment to truth would be pitted against one another. Until eventually she'd say something she's had to say many, many times since: "Stop it."

Why give you that glimpse into Julie's trials? Because even though pundits debate the merits of this or that plan, professors debate the pre-eminent novel, talking heads the best era of basketball, and co-workers the best wing joint in town, there are some things that just aren't debatable. One thing is objectively better.

That's the argument Hebrews 1 makes convincingly. The question before us—the "debate," if you will—is this: "Is the Son of God superior to the angels?" Every one of you can answer.

So, might we press into it further? *Why* is He superior? Today's text will answer along these lines: *Because God has said, from the beginning and into eternity, His Son rules over all.* That sentence will function as our outline as well. Notice first,

**1. God Has Said (vv. 1–9)**

I won't rehash everything we've covered during the past two weeks, but maybe we could review by doing some counting. First, note that in the prologue there are seven statements about the Son and what He's done: 1. He is the heir of all things (v. 2); 2. He is the radiance of God's glory (v. 3); 3. He is the exact representation of God's nature (v. 3); 4. He is the sustainer of all things (v. 3); 5. He made purification of sins (v. 3); 6. He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (v. 3); 7. He inherited a more excellent name than the angels (v. 4). Those are seven statements about the Son.

But note what the author does next in Hebrews 1. After making those seven statements, he quotes seven Old Testament Scriptures. We covered five of these last week: 1. Psalm 2:7 (v. 5); 2. 2 Samuel 7:14 (v. 5); 3. Deuteronomy 32:43 (v. 6); 4. Psalm 104:4 (v. 7); 5. Psalm 45:6-7 (v. 8) Today we have two more: 6. Psalm 102:25-27 (v. 10–11) and the culminating passage, Psalm 110:1 (v. 13).

He makes seven statements and then he cites seven Scriptures. In one sense, considering how the book *began*, this makes perfect sense. God *had* spoken many times and in many ways. There's continuity with these Old Testament Scriptures. This revelation from God is not *entirely* new. However, it is, in the most important sense, *new*. In these days, He's spoken to us in His Son (1:2). All the Scriptures he quotes find their fulfillment in Him.

It's also worth pointing out that it's not *only* that God has spoken *in* His Son, these passages make plain that the Father has spoken *to* His Son. Chris titled last week's message, "The Father's Affirmation," for good reason. In verse 5, the Father speaks: **You are my Son, today I have begotten you, and I will be a Father to Him and He shall be a Son to me.**

Maybe as we're studying the infancy narrative in Matthew's Gospel, we might recall how Luke's Gospel covers that same period. In the opening chapters of Luke, character after character tell us who this baby is. Gabriel informs Mary: **He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High** (Luke 1:31–32). Then Zacharias said that He was **a horn of salvation** (Lk. 1:69). Then, on the day of His birth, an angel proclaimed that a Savior had been born (Lk. 2:11). Then, in Luke 2, Simeon says *this* about 40-day old Jesus, **for my eyes have seen Your salvation** (Lk. 2:30). So, in Luke 1 and 2, testimony after testimony pile up, telling us who this Person is.

Then, after all those voices speak, Luke brings us to a scene in chapter 3, with that young child having grown in both wisdom and stature, when a voice comes out of heaven, saying this: **You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased** (Lk. 3:22). Maybe we could ask the same question Hebrews 1:5 asked, "To which of the angels did He ever say *that*?"

The Father spoke Psalm 2 to His Son, as well as 2 Samuel 7, and Isaiah 42, and we could go on. Why is this so significant for us? Why is it *vital* that we see Christ as the fulfillment of all of Israel's longing? *And* that Yahweh has said as much? To put it simply, there is no salvation otherwise. There is nothing to hope in. To use Paul's language, we are of all men most to be pitied (1 Cor. 15). Why? Because the argument of Hebrews depends upon *this* Man—born as a babe, testified to by the angels, baptized in the Jordan—being our Priest. He's the One who gives unholy men and women access to a holy God. What Yahweh thinks about Him determines whether or not you can be saved at all.

As we've said, Hebrews is concerned with your hope: **Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful** (Heb. 10:23). He who made those Old Testament promises has been faithful to fulfill them. All the promises find their yes in Him.

And we can hold fast to our hope because it's not *only* that God spoke *to* His Son in these texts, He also was speaking *about* Him in those passages. Verse 8 quoted Psalm 45: **But of the Son He says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever."** Again, who's speaking? The Father. Who is He speaking of? The Son. The Father calls the Son, "God."

And that leads us into the passage we consider today. Verse 10 begins with the word, "and." It's continuing what verse 8 began. This is *another* thing the Father says **of the Son** (v. 8).<sup>1</sup> Verse 10: **And, "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands"**

God has spoken. And what God has said concerns, secondly, something from the beginning and into eternity.

## 2. . . . From the Beginning and Into Eternity (vv. 10-12)

Again, there are seven Old Testament citations in Hebrews 1. Verse 10 is the sixth, from Psalm 102. The first aspect we shouldn't miss is akin to the one we just mentioned in verse 8. In verse 8, the Father calls the Son, "God." In verse 10, the Father calls the Son, "Lord." Since we're doing some counting today, this word translated Lord (*kyrios*)<sup>2</sup> is used well over 8000 times in the Greek Old

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<sup>1</sup> G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 939.

<sup>2</sup> κυριος

Testament. And of those 8000+ uses, over 6000 times it was used to translate the divine name *Yahweh*.<sup>3</sup>

I bring those numbers up to say that these Jewish Christians would've known the word well. I don't know if you saw this clip, but a few months back a *Jeopardy* clue went like this, "Matthew 6:9 says, 'Our Father, which art in heaven, \_\_\_\_\_ be thy Name.'" Sadly, no one on Jeopardy that night knew the answer. Probably everyone in this room does. But, I don't bring that up to say that *kyrios* is like "Hallowed" in familiarity. It'd be more like someone who'd read through the Bible every year and attended church for 40 years—that person's familiarity with the word, "Christ."

This word—*kyrios* (Lord)—was *all over* the Old Testament. In Psalm 102, the passage quoted here, the context is suffering. All day long the Psalmist's enemies taunt him (102:8). He lies awake (102:7). His heart is struck down like grass—withered. He forgets to eat (102:4). But, as with many other Psalms, there's *eventually* a turn. At the turn, Psalm 102:12 reads: **But you, O LORD, are enthroned forever.** That's merely *one* of the 6000 places where *kyrios* is used to describe the One in whom Israel trusts.

By quoting this passage, the author of Hebrews is not hiding his hermeneutic.<sup>4</sup> He unapologetically asserts that the "Lord" of Psalm 102 refers to the Son.<sup>5</sup> What has *He* done? Verse 10: **You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth.** I imagine you agree that the language—"in the beginning"—is far from subtle.<sup>6</sup> What Genesis 1 tells us, Hebrews 1 details further. It's the Son **through whom also He made the world** (1:2).

Verse 10 continues: **You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands.** In the context of Hebrews 1's "debate"—the comparison between the cherubim and the Son of God—this last clause about the heavens begs the question, "Who created the angelic realm?"<sup>7</sup> The heavens are the works of His hands.

What God has said in His Son concerns something from the beginning. But it also concerns something that endures, something that marches on into eternity. Verse 11: **They will perish, but you remain; and they all will become old like a garment, and like a mantle you will roll them up; like a garment they will all be changed. But you are the same, and your years will not come to an end.**

Yesterday was the first day of fall. It's a decent time of the year to consider the *impermanent* aspects of creation. We'll see incremental change over the next few months. Leaves will die. If we were to live another 100 years, we'd see the trees that held those leaves die. Aspects of the created order pass away. They'd seen it. We see it. As verse 11 says it, **they all will become old like a garment.** To be clear, neither Psalm 102 nor Hebrews 1 advocate what Plato believed, or what the Gnostics affirmed, that what's physical is inherently bad.<sup>8</sup> That's not what he's saying. Nonetheless, it's true that the grass withers and the flower fades (1 Pet. 1:24). Creation groans.

The Psalmist and the book of Hebrews use these words—these ideas—to set up a contrast. Verse 11: **They will perish, but You remain.**

Every September, it seems, our family ends up watching something about September 11<sup>th</sup>. You know the stats about how much debris descended when those towers fell, how much was destroyed by fire, by airplane fuel, and how much the smoke affected Manhattan for miles. This year, as we reflected on it, I heard a story I'd never heard before. A month *after* the attacks, in

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<sup>3</sup> Moisés Silva, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Vol. 2, 769.

<sup>4</sup> His interpretive lens

<sup>5</sup> Dana Harris, *Hebrews*, EGGNT, 29.

<sup>6</sup> Gareth Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT, 112.

<sup>7</sup> Harold Attridge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 60.

<sup>8</sup> See Michael Goheen and Craig Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview*, 72–76.

October, rescue workers found a burnt and broken Callery pear tree underneath the piles of concrete and steel rubble. And it seemed as if it survived. So, they dug it out, took it to a local nursery so they might care for it, and in 2010 it was replanted right there at Ground Zero. Little to nothing else still stands from September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2001, but in 2023 that tree thrives. In fact, they take seedlings from it every year and send them to other places that have faced tragedy.<sup>9</sup>

Because our lives are full of such fleeting realities, we grasp for that which *endures*. At least we ought to. The Scriptures implore us to. Peter writes, quoting the prophet Isaiah, **All flesh is like grass, all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever** (1 Pet 1:24–25). Or Psalm 136: **Give thanks to the Lord (the *kyrios*), for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever** (136:1). The Scriptures repeatedly emphasize—and point us to—those things that endure. His word endures. His love endures. How is that possible? Verse 11: **They will perish, but You remain.**

We’re repeatedly tempted to think or live as if *this* or *that* passing thing is worthy of our unbridled affection. We trust in it as if it doesn’t have a shelf life. I’ve told my kids, sometimes, “While you’re thinking that 4<sup>th</sup> grade, who your friends are now, what will happen in the Spring, is so vital—so central to your existence—I don’t even remember who my friends *were* in 4<sup>th</sup> grade.” The longer we live, the more we know that everything under the sun is like the smoke from a blown-out candle.<sup>10</sup>

Is that too blunt? Too bleak? It *would* be if we didn’t have the end of verse 12. In the midst of change after change, impermanence and wearing out, there’s this. Verse 12: **You are the same, and your years will not come to an end.** He’s anticipating what will come in chapter 13:8: **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.** He’s unaffected by change, so is His Word, so is His love for His people, so that the purification He’s made for them endures, as does His ever-present pleading for them before the throne. Why? Because He is the same, and His years will never come to an end.

Why be duped by that which is passing away?

This enduring hope is right at the center of the quotation from Psalm 102. Note the clothing imagery at the end of verse 11: **they all will become old like a garment, and like a mantle<sup>11</sup> you will roll them up; like a garment they will also be changed.** The author is not *only* emphasizing that creation is temporal and the Son unchanging and eternal. He’s emphasizing that the One who endures is the One who will bring creation to its appointed goal.<sup>12</sup> The One who endures will transform it so that it will no longer change. And He’ll do so with ease. The clothing language indicates that it will be no harder for Him to deliver creation from its groaning than it is for us to fold up a coat.<sup>13</sup> The enduring One will make creation an enduring one.

Anyone still think the angels are superior?

What God has said concerns something from the beginning that goes into eternity. And what God has said is that from the beginning and into eternity His Son rules over all.

### 3. . . . His Son Rules Over All (vv. 13–14)

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.911memorial.org/connect/blog/tree-survived>

<sup>10</sup> See David Gibson, *Living Life Backward*.

<sup>11</sup> Robe, ESV

<sup>12</sup> Cockerill, 113.

<sup>13</sup> Cockerill, 114.

The way the question is written in verse 13 communicates the summarizing function of this final Old Testament citation.<sup>14</sup> Verse 13: **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”**

Let’s answer the question first. To which of the angels has the Father said that?

None of them. This is Psalm 110, the Old Testament passage most frequently quoted in the New Testament.<sup>15</sup> It might be the programmatic Old Testament text for the entire book of Hebrews.<sup>16</sup> Jesus Himself quoted this Psalm in the Gospels, asking the Pharisees whose son the Christ is? They replied that the Christ—the Messiah—would be the Son of David. Jesus then masterfully asked, **“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 your enemies beneath Your feet”?”** (Matt. 22:43–44). Jesus is telling the Pharisees something vital, that this Messiah must be more than *merely* the Son of David. David calls his descendant, “Lord.” By the way, same term: *kyrios*.

When Jesus quoted Psalm 110, Peter wasn’t far away. And a short time later, on the Day of Pentecost, at the climax of Peter’s sermon, he too quotes Psalm 110:1. Though Jesus made the case that this “Lord” could not be *just* the Son of David, Peter makes plain this “Lord’s” identity, quoting Psalm 110 and then declaring, **Let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified** (Acts 2:36). Jesus knew Psalm 110 was about Him. Peter knew that as well. So does the author of Hebrews.

As the prologue of Hebrews 1—the seven statements about Christ—pinnacle with One who **sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high** (1:3), so does this string of seven quotations.<sup>17</sup> It’s a proclamation of Christ’s superiority. He’s at the place of highest honor, the right hand of the Father.<sup>18</sup> And one day all of His enemies will lie prostrate at His feet.<sup>19</sup>

Then, after all *that*, the author of Hebrews returns to the angels. Verse 14: **Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?** The answer is an unqualified, “yes.” Angels are good gifts from the Lord. But the debate is over. What do angels do? They minister on behalf of those who are being saved. What did Christ—the Son—do? He saves.

## Conclusion

Because He’s the King promised.

However, we dare not unmoor this passage from the context of this book.<sup>20</sup> This promised King isn’t One that remains far off, royalty unapproachable. In chapter 1, he’s introducing Psalm 110 to us. Hebrews will go on to quote *another* verse from that Psalm later, describing the Son as the fulfillment of *these* words too: **You are a priest forever** (7:17).

*We’ve* been granted access to Psalm 110’s King—the One sitting at the Father’s right hand. And we have this access because He, Psalm 110’s Priest, gave it.

He—this Son, this Priest, Our King—forever welcomes us. So, draw near to His table (10:19–25).

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<sup>14</sup> Harris, 32. Maybe you’ll notice that this is the only OT passage in chapter 1 not paired with another.

<sup>15</sup> Beale and Carson, 943.

<sup>16</sup> Beale and Carson, 942.

<sup>17</sup> Cockerill, 114.

<sup>18</sup> Harris, 16.

<sup>19</sup> Attridge, 62; Paul understood Psalm 110 this way: **Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet** (1 Cor. 15:24).

<sup>20</sup> The quotation of Psalm 110 “anticipates Christ’s role as high priest,” Beale and Carson, 943.