

October 25, 2009 by Steve Brandon



Better Than Angels (part 2)

Hebrews 1:8-14

1. Jesus is the Son (verses 5)
2. Jesus is Worshipped (verses 6-7)
3. Jesus is Royalty (verses 8-9).
4. Jesus is the Eternal Creator (verses 10-12).
5. Jesus is the Sovereign One (verses 13-14).

I told you last week that our society has come to view angels a bit differently than the Jews of the 1st century and differently than they appear in the Old Testament Scriptures. We tend to view angels as gentle women with wings, coming to comfort us in our troubles. That was Sunday. Well, the following Tuesday, in the Rockford Register Star, I came across an advertisement from RockfordWoman.com, advertising a presentation that will be given by Joan Wester Anderson entitled, "An afternoon with Angels." The advertisement included a picture of a feminine, flowery looking angel with the word "Believe" below it. This is how we tend to see angels today. They are soft teddy bears who are waiting for us to believe in them.

Apparently, Joan Wester Anderson is a bit of an expert on angels, having written a few books about angels. She has written books such as, "Where Angels Walk," "In the Arms of Angels," "Guardian Angels," "The Power of Angels," "An Angel to Watch Over Me," and she will be giving a talk on angels. Now, I don't know anything about these books. Nor do I know much about this woman. But, do not think that it's an accident that she's talking with other women about these things. In general, men simply aren't interested in thinking about Precious Moments figurines that are flying around to comfort us.

My suspicion is that Joan Wester Anderson's fascination with angels is only partly grounded in Scripture. My suspicion also is that her fascination with angels is mostly ground in the experiences of people who claim to have been helped by angels. Angels appear in lots of stories and anecdotes by people who have been rescued from great danger. These stories and anecdotes contain little Scripture, but many are fascinated by this type of angel.

It is amazing to me that the world is interested in angels when the angels are, in fact, fascinated by Jesus Christ. They worship Him. Anyone interested in angels ought to know that the Bible indicates that angels are obsessed with Jesus Christ and the salvation that He brings. It says in 1 Peter 1:12 that angels long to look into those who are saved by believing in Jesus Christ. Jesus said that angels are around the throne rejoicing when sinners are saved (Luke 15:10). In the gospel of John (chapter 12), we read of how the angels around the throne of God behold the glory of Jesus and worship Him day and night.

One would think that anyone who truly knew angels would be drawn to Jesus. But, alas, there are those whose heart is fascinated by angels, but miss the One who is greater than angels.

If there is any passage in all of the Scripture that might persuade those angel-lovers in the world to set their affections upon Jesus Christ, it is the passage that is set before us this morning. The argument in Hebrews, chapter 1, is that Jesus is "better than angels." You can see it right there in verse 4, "Jesus has become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they." From verses 5-14, the same point is made over and over again: Jesus Christ is better than the angels.

To prove his point, the writer quotes from seven different passages of Scripture, all of which compound to secure his contention, that Jesus is better than the angels. In my own study this week, I was really amazed at how well all of these passages interrelated to one another. It's not as if these passages are entirely unrelated. These are common themes in many of them. These themes come together in perfect harmony. They point to Jesus, anointed as the Messiah. They point to Jesus as God. They tell of how Jesus rules as a king. They tell of how Jesus was the creator. They tell of how Jesus will endure forever. You will see these themes come up again and again and again, relentlessly proving that Jesus is better than angels; so, believe in Jesus! Don't be so fascinated by angels and miss the One that the angels are fascinated by!

My aim as we go through this passage is the same as last week - lift Jesus high! I want your love for Him to increase! I want your worship of Him to increase! Last week, we looked at verses 4 through 7. And, though the details of this passage may be a bit difficult, the main point of it all is crystal clear. Jesus Christ is "Better Than Angels." If you like to write in your Bible, you might draw a box around verse. Write "main point" in the margin. Such an annotation will help you the next time you come back to this text.

This morning, we will pick it up in verse 8. However, because the passage fits together as a whole, let's begin with verse 5. And as we do, we'll have an opportunity to review from last week. The first reason why Jesus is better than the angels is that ...

1. Jesus is the Son (verse 5).

Hebrews 1:5

For to which of the angels did He ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"?

And again, "I will be a father to Him and he shall be a Son to me"?

The point here is that none of the angels have ever been given the name, "Son." As the Son, Jesus owns a name better than any of the angels ever have. A son is higher than a servant, which is what every angel is (1:14). And thus, He is greater than the angels.

The next point comes in verses 6 and 7.

2. Jesus is Worshiped (verses 6-7).

Hebrews 1:6-7

And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, "And let all the angels of God worship Him."
And of the angels He says, "Who makes His angels winds, and His ministers a flame of fire."

The point of these verses is the contrast. We see a divine fiat coming from the throne of God to the angels. They are commanded to worship Jesus. Angels, on the other hand, are namely messengers and ministers. They are not to be worshiped. Just as the lesser is blessed by the greater (Heb. 7:7), so also is the better worshiped by the lesser. In this case, it is Jesus, who is worshiped by the angels. Thus, it makes Jesus as better than the angels.

All of that is by way of review. And now, we come to our third point in verses 8 and 9, ...

3. Jesus is Royalty (verses 8-9).

By this, I merely mean that Jesus is the king! None of the angels have ever assumed the title of "king." Nor have any of the angels ever been anointed "king." But, Jesus has.

Hebrews 1:8-9

But of the Son He says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom.
You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions."

Notice here the words of royalty in verses 8 and 9. Jesus, Himself has a **throne** (in verse 8), "your throne, O God." Only kings sit on thrones. The king's servants stood around the throne and serve the one on the throne. He sits; they stand. None of the angels ever had a throne. But, Jesus does because He is King. He is royalty.

Furthermore, Jesus has a **scepter** (verse 8). Only kings have scepters, which they make their desires known and by which they rule their kingdom. Perhaps you remember the time when Esther came into the presence of the king. She would only be permitted to come if he let down his scepter (Esther 5). Such is the prerogative of the king. None of the angels ever had a scepter.

Jesus rules over a **kingdom** (verse 8). Only kings have a kingdom. Everyone else is a subject to the king. We never see any of the angels possessing and ruling over a kingdom.

Jesus has been **anointed** (verse 9). Priests are anointed (Ex. 28:41); prophets are anointed (1 Kings 19:16); and, kings are also anointed. Perhaps you remember when Samuel came and identified Saul as king of Israel. He "took the flask of oil, poured it on his head, kissed him and said, 'Has not the LORD anointed you a ruler over His inheritance?'" (1 Sam. 10:1). It was his anointing. None of the angels were ever anointed.

You add all of these things up and you can see how much greater Jesus is than the angels. He is royalty. No where does this emphasis upon royalty come out more than in the original Old Testament context from which the writer of Hebrews quotes. These words come from Psalm 45. It would do us well to look at Psalm 45 a bit.

This Psalm is called, "A Marriage Psalm." It is celebrating a wedding. But, it's not any wedding, it's the wedding of the king! The Psalmist begins in verse 1, ...

Psalm 45:1

My heart overflows with a good theme;
I address my verses to the King;
My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

One of the things that I love about weddings is that they are always happy occasions. Two lives, coming together as one! Two families forming a bond. All of their friends come to the celebration. The bride takes great pains to look her best. The groom dons a tuxedo. The ceremony is filled with joy. The reception afterwards is a time of rejoicing!

In verse 1, the Psalmist's heart is overflowing with happiness. He sets forth his desire to write a few lyrics dedicated to the king, who is soon to be wed. His thoughts begin in verse 2 by describing the groom.

Psalm 45:2

You are fairer than the sons of men;
Grace is poured upon Your lips;
Therefore God has blessed You forever.

Here was the king in all his beauty, lifted up as being "fairer than the sons of men." And, God's grace is upon him, receiving His favor forever. His strength is shown in verse 3, ...

Psalm 45:3-5
Gird Your sword on Your thigh, O Mighty One,
In Your splendor and Your majesty!
And in Your majesty ride on victoriously,
For the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness;
Let Your right hand teach You awesome things.
Your arrows are sharp;
The peoples fall under You;
Your arrows are in the heart of the King's enemies.

The picture is one of military strength. With sword in hand, with arrows in his quiver, He mounts his royal steed, and goes forth to defend the truth, to uphold justice, to conquer his enemies. And, he rides on victoriously! His kingdom isn't short-lived. It continues forever!

Psalm 45:6
Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;

It's right here that we begin to see that Psalm 45 has a larger scope than we might first have expected. The king here is addressed as deity. He is called, "God." He sits upon a throne that lasts forever. He never relinquishes the throne. But, rather, he reigns forever. Here we see an instance of how the passages quoted in Hebrews carry the same theme.

Perhaps even here you remember from last week when the writer to the Hebrews quoted from 2 Samuel 7, in which David was given the promise that one would come from his house to sit upon the throne forever. 2 Samuel 7:16, "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever." And, here in Psalm 45, we see a parallel thought. The king's throne will endure forever! The only way for a throne to last forever and ever is for a greater king to sit upon the throne; a king who will never relinquish His throne.

In 2 Samuel 7, we saw how God's promise pointed to a divine Messiah. Here, we see the same thing. We see a divine king in verse 6, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever." Back in Hebrews, we see these words being directed to the Son. "Of the Son He says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever." This points to the divine king, Jesus Christ. As such, of course, He is better than the angels. As we continue on in verse 6, we see His reign depicted as a righteous reign.

Psalm 45:6b-7a
A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom.
You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;

This, of course, describes Jesus perfectly. No-one ever loved righteousness and hated wickedness like Jesus!

God gives the governmental rulers of this age their authority (Rom. 13:1). Their role is clear. They are to punish the evildoers. And they are to praise those who do right (1 Peter. 2:14). And to some extent, all governments across this planet do this. Otherwise, anarchy would reign. Admittedly, some are better than others. But, none of them reign perfectly. But, the thrust of our text here is that this ruler will be particularly attentive to the issues of righteousness and justice. We would expect such a reign from our God. His kingdom is a righteous kingdom. In His kingdom, there will be no injustice.

God's blessing is upon this kingdom. That's what we see in verse 7, ...

Psalm 45:7
"Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of joy above Your fellows."

Here we see God blessing God! This king is identified as God in verse 6. And yet, we see that God is anointing him in verse 7. The only way that we can make sense of this verse is to embrace the Trinity. The Godhead has multiple persons. And yet, God is one! This is the mystery of the Trinity.

Verse 7 has messianic overtones. The word translated in verse 7, "God, has anointed You," is the Hebrew word, "Meshiach," which we saw last week when we went through Psalm 2. The one spoken of in verse 7 is the anointed one.

Notice how God has anointed him. He has anointed Him with gladness. This gives us a great portrait of Jesus. Don't ever think that Jesus is in heaven as a grumpy ruler of the universe, looking down upon all of your sins being disgusted with you. On the contrary, Jesus is in a joy-filled heaven right now. He is delighted to be upon His throne.

The writer to the Hebrews will later say that it was "the joy set before Him" that gave Jesus the willingness to "endure the cross, despising the shame" to finally "sit down at the right hand of God" (Heb. 12:2). Jesus rules with a joy-filled spirit. He longs for you to know that Joy as well.

And it comes when you acknowledge Jesus as Lord, and believe in His sacrifice for your sins.

For the sake of time, let's travel quickly through the rest of this Psalm. It paints the portrait of a royal wedding.

Psalm 45:8-9

All Your garments are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia;
Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made You glad.
Kings' daughters are among Your noble ladies;
At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir.

His garments are prepared. The musicians are in place. The guests have arrived. The king is seated with the decked-out queen of Ophir at his side. In verse 10, we see the bride described, ...

Psalm 45:10

Listen, O daughter, give attention and incline your ear:
Forget your people and your father's house;

The time has come to leave her household to join with the king in holy matrimony. Upon seeing the bride, the king will be filled with passion, ...

Psalm 45:11

Then the King will desire your beauty.

She will respond in respect to him.

Psalm 45:11

Because He is your Lord, bow down to Him.

These words call us to think of the marriage supper of the Lamb. Jesus Christ has sanctified His bride through His blood, and made the church lovely. The church, the bride, in turn, worships Him! In verse 12, we see the guests arriving with gifts in hand and well-wishing in their hearts.

Psalm 45:12

The daughter of Tyre will come with a gift;
The rich among the people will seek your favor.

In verse 13, we see the wedding ceremony.

Psalm 45:13-15

The King's daughter is all glorious within;
Her clothing is interwoven with gold.
She will be led to the King in embroidered work;
The virgins, her companions who follow her,
Will be brought to You.
They will be led forth with gladness and rejoicing;
They will enter into the King's palace.

The bride is radiant. Her clothes are magnificent. She is accompanied by her fellow virgins. They enter the palace of the king (where the wedding takes place). In verse 16, we see the fruit of this royal union: sons, who will be kings.

Psalm 45:16-17

In place of your fathers will be your sons;
You shall make them princes in all the earth.
I will cause Your name to be remembered in all generations;
Therefore the peoples will give You thanks forever and ever.

There's Psalm 45, a testimony to the royalty of Jesus Christ, a status to which none of the angels ever ascend. Again, Jesus is Royalty (verses 8-9). The next argument comes in verses 10-12, ...

4. Jesus is the Eternal Creator (verses 10-12).

We read, ...

Hebrews 1:10-12

And, "You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands; 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 also be changed but you are the same, and your years will not come to an end."

The verses are addressed to Jesus. They speak of how Jesus is the creator. "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the works of your hands" (verse 10). We saw this a few weeks ago when we looked at verse 2, "through whom also He made the world." Unlike the angels, who are made into winds, Jesus created the winds.

And so, on one level, these verses speak about Jesus as creator, which obviously made Jesus better than the angels. But, there is another theme going on in verses 11 and 12. These verses speak of His eternity. Verse 11, "you remain." Verse 12, "You are the same, and your years will not come to an end."

However, these words of the eternity of Jesus are done so in relation to the perishing world (which He created). It's that created world that will perish, but Jesus, on the other hand, will remain (verse 11). It's the created world that will be rolled up and tossed like a garment, but it is Jesus who does the tossing (verse 12). It's the garment that will be changed, but Jesus will remain the same (verse 12). And so, in taking these two themes into account, I have called my fourth point, "Jesus is the Eternal Creator." He is the creator (verse 10), and He continues long after the creation is gone (verses 11-12).

The illustration here is of clothes that wear out. Perhaps you have some clothes that are worn out. What do you do with them? You roll them up and throw them away. I was desperately looking for some illustration material here this morning. Yvonne and I had a discussion about some old sweatshirts that I had, which were my favorites. I thought of my blue UCLA sweatshirt. It had stitched across the front in big letters, "UCLA." Over the course of time, it developed two large holes to the sides of the outer letters, so that I could even rest my hands inside my sweatshirt. It was my favorite. The collar was tearing away as it rubbed against my whiskers. Its sleeves were ripped up. But, I continued to wear it.

Now, I looked for this sweatshirt, but couldn't find it. My wife rolled it up and threw it away some time ago! Is this difficult to do? No. The only difficult thing is that you can often be sentimentally attached to the old things and refuse to throw them away. But, rolling them up and casting them away is very simple to do. And that's the point of this passage. The creation will crumble, but Christ will endure. The universe began with Jesus. He will end it. He will roll it up with the ease with which we throw away an old rag.

This imagery of rolling garments up and throwing them away is used elsewhere in the Scriptures. In Revelation 6:14 we read of the day of the Lord, "The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places."

Well, as we have done with the other passages quoted by the writer of Hebrews, let's dig into this one as well. These verses come from Psalm 102. So, we will look at Psalm 102. As with many Psalms, we don't know who wrote Psalm 102. We only know by the superscript that it was written by one who was experiencing great difficulty in his life. The superscript entitles this Psalm, "A Prayer of the Afflicted." We might easily call the writer of this Psalm, "Mr. Afflicted."

On one hand, it's a very sad Psalm. It's a prayer of one whose life is difficult. He is distressed (verse 2). He is afflicted (verse 4) and lonely (verse 7). He finds himself the object of derision by his enemies (verse 8). On the other hand, it gives hope. It points to God, who abides forever (verse 12). It points to God's grace (verse 13). It points to the one who saves (verse 20). Let me begin reading. And as I do, notice his affliction.

Psalm 102:1-11

Hear my prayer, O LORD!
And let my cry for help come to You.
Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my distress;
Incline Your ear to me;
In the day when I call answer me quickly.
For my days have been consumed in smoke,
And my bones have been scorched like a hearth.
My heart has been smitten like grass and has withered away,
Indeed, I forget to eat my bread.
Because of the loudness of my groaning
My bones cling to my flesh.
I resemble a pelican of the wilderness;
I have become like an owl of the waste places.
I lie awake,
I have become like a lonely bird on a housetop.
My enemies have reproached me all day long;
Those who deride me have used my name as a curse.
For I have eaten ashes like bread
And mingled my drink with weeping
Because of Your indignation and Your wrath,
For You have lifted me up and cast me away.
My days are like a lengthened shadow,
And I wither away like grass.

Here you see the desperation of a man in turmoil. He's in pain. He's had difficulty in life. He realizes that his days are short. But, then in verse 12, we encounter the hinge of the Psalm, where the hope is found, ...

Psalm 102:12
But You, O LORD, abide forever,
And Your name to all generations.

(That's in contrast to verse 11, when Mr. Affliction knew that his days were short.). Anyway, he continues (verse 13), speaking of God and of His grace, ...

Psalm 102:13-24
You will arise and have compassion on Zion;
For it is time to be gracious to her,
For the appointed time has come.
Surely Your servants find pleasure in her stones
And feel pity for her dust.
So the nations will fear the name of the LORD
And all the kings of the earth Your glory.
For the LORD has built up Zion;
He has appeared in His glory.
He has regarded the prayer of the destitute
And has not despised their prayer.
This will be written for the generation to come,
That a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.
For He looked down from His holy height;
From heaven the LORD gazed upon the earth,
To hear the groaning of the prisoner,
To set free those who were doomed to death,
That men may tell of the name of the LORD in Zion
And His praise in Jerusalem,
When the peoples are gathered together,
And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.
He has weakened my strength in the way;
He has shortened my days.
I say, "O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my days,
Your years are throughout all generations.

Notice what encourages the Psalmist. It's not the present salvation that he's experiencing. There aren't any personal pronouns in this section. There's nothing about "me" and how you have helped "me." On the contrary, it's all about the saving power the LORD. It's all about the salvation that he knows God's people will experience. And so, his circumstances haven't changed. We find him in verse 23 the same place that he was in verse 11, on the short end of a short life filled with trouble. And yet, there is hope in God. His hope is found in the fact that He endures forever. And then, comes our quote from Hebrews, verse 25, ...

Psalm 102:25-28
Of old You founded the earth,
And the heavens are the work of Your hands.
Even they will perish, but You endure;
And all of them will wear out like a garment;
Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.
But You are the same,
And Your years will not come to an end.
"he children of Your servants will continue,
And their descendants will be established before You.

It ought not to be lost on us that the one saving in Psalm 102 is identified as the Lord, Jesus Christ in Hebrews 1. Now, there's nothing inherent in Psalm 102 that would lead us to draw that conclusion. But, it's a proper conclusion to draw. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." He is eternal and doesn't change. Hebrews 1:2 says that Jesus "made the world." He is the creator of the universe. Hebrews is all about Jesus being our savior. In fact, that's where chapter one is headed.

Turn back to Hebrews. Look at what's coming next week. After the writer finally finishes his section, proving that Jesus is better than the angels, he says in chapter 2, verse 1, ...

Hebrews 2:1-3a
"For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"

The answer is simply that we won't escape if we neglect the great salvation that we have in Jesus. Because, we have great Savior! He is much better than angels. Angels can't save. They are mere messengers. They are mere servants. Don't look to the angels. Look to Jesus! If you are consumed with angels, like Joan Wester Anderson, then you are in danger of missing the greater, by being consumed with the lesser. Jesus is better than the angels.

And now, we come to the final reason why Jesus is greater than angels. According to verses 13 and 14, ...

5. Jesus is the Sovereign One (verses 13-14).

Hebrews 1:13-14

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"? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

We again see the similar formula, "To which of the angels has He ever said." The writer said it for the first time in verse 5, "For to which of the angels did He ever say." These two similar questions form an inclusion. The answer in verse 13 is the same as the answer in verse 5. He said this to none of the angels. None of the angels were told to sit. Instead, the angels are sent out to serve.

Jesus said that there are "angels in heaven [who] continually see the face of [God the] Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 18:10). I believe that they are beholding God's face, so that as soon as the word is given, they might go and serve His little ones. They have eyes like the eyes of servants, who look to the hands of their master, seeking to discern whatever work they might be called upon to do (Psalm 123:2). But, by way of contrast, the king sits, symbolic of his work. The angels are sent out, indicative of their work. The contrast between the angels and the Son is the point of the passage. Jesus sits and the angels are sent out.

To prove this, the writer quotes from Psalm 110. This is the first of several quotations of this very Psalm in the book of Hebrews. It was alluded to in chapter 1, verse 3, when it says the Jesus "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." It's quoted again in Hebrews 10:12-13 in contrast to the high priests who are busy about doing their work. Jesus, on the other hand, "having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet." Such is the sacrifice of Jesus. It is so much better than what the priests could ever offer (but, that's coming later).

Psalm 110 is also alluded to in Hebrews 12:2, where the writer calls us to "[fix] our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Think about this. We are called to think about the present place of Jesus: at God the Father's right hand! That's the way that we get through the trials and agonies of life, by looking to Jesus. That's the point of the next verse in Hebrews 12, "For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." When your attention is upon Jesus, and you consider the trials He went through, your own soul can be strengthened to live to His glory.

Let's return to Psalm 110. It's a short Psalm but it's power-packed. This Psalm is quoted (or alluded to) in the New Testament some 22 times!

Psalm 110:1

The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."

This first verse is what's quoted in Hebrews 1:13. It pictures the sovereign Lord, giving great honor to David's Lord, the Messiah, seated at the right-hand of the throne of power. No angel ever received such an honor. In fact, you will look long and hard throughout all of the Scripture looking for any place where angels are ever honored, or rewarded, or promised some type of distinction or rank, or given any gift. Your searching will be in vain. It just doesn't happen.

Angels are like servants who, when done with their work say, "We deserve no honor." "We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done" (Luke 17:10). But, as Jesus received honor to sit in such a place, He is much better than any of the angels. The seat of Jesus is the seat of power and authority and victory.

This whole thought of placing an enemy at the footstool of a king is indicative of a ruler's power. In ancient days, the conquering king would place his foot upon the neck of the king he conquered as a sign that he was victorious. That's the picture given here. Jesus conquers! That's the point of the rest of Psalm 110.

Psalm 110:2-7

The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying,
"Rule in the midst of Your enemies."

Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power;
In holy array, from the womb of the dawn,
Your youth are to You as the dew.

The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind,

"You are a priest forever

According to the order of Melchizedek."

The Lord is at Your right hand;
He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath.
He will judge among the nations,
He will fill them with corpses,

He will shatter the chief men over a broad country.
He will drink from the brook by the wayside;
Therefore He will lift up His head.

I would love to comment on verse 4 (The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek"), but we have no time. However, in our study of Hebrews, we will come back here often. This verse is the premise of chapter 7. It is crucial to chapter 9. But today, we pass by. So, put this in your mind. We will return again.

Psalm 110 is a victory Psalm. That's the point of the passage in Hebrews. Jesus has obtained the victory and is seated in the place of honor. His work is accomplished. His deeds are done. He now rules as King. And then, in the book of Hebrews, by way of contrast, we are told of the angels in verse 14, ...

Hebrews 1:14

Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

There's almost a note of sarcasm in those words. Jesus is on the throne, and you want to pay attention to those who serve Him and His subjects? That's like going to London, seeing Queen Elizabeth at Buckingham Palace, and then focusing your attention upon the maid who is in charge of the linens of palace. Why would you focus upon the linen lady when you have access to the queen?

This verse does bring up the concept of guardian angels. Jesus mentioned such angels in Matthew 18:10 when describing the angels of the "little ones" who are "in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven." The idea here is that these angels are in heaven awaiting God's summons to go and protect the frail believers from danger. Angels are servants to us who will inherit salvation. Indeed angels help us. Psalm 91 tells us that "He will give His angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways. They will bear you up in their hands, that you not strike your foot against a stone" (Ps. 91:11-12).

A general principle of Scripture is that the days of the righteous will be prolonged, but the days of the wicked will be short (Proverbs 2:21-22; 10:30). It may well be that angels are sent out to help the righteous live longer. That car crash that never happens; that disaster that you barely miss; there very well could be angels involved in these matters. Joan Wester Anderson may well be recording genuine events that transpire. After all, an angel shut the mouths of the lions to protect Daniel (Dan 6:22). An angel delivered the apostles from prison (Acts 5:19-20), even once saving Peter from certain death at the hand of Herod, thereby prolonging his life (Acts 12:7-11). An angel ministered to Jesus in a time of weakness (Matt 4:11).

Angels are real. They do guard us. We ought not to doubt their existence. In Hebrews 13:2, we read that we are to be hospitable to strangers, because we may well be entertaining an angel, without knowing it. If you do know it, perhaps you can tell the story and get into Joan Wester Anderson's next book. However, the premise of Hebrews 13:2 is that we often don't even know that we encountered an angel. Perhaps we helped them, as we would anyone else. Perhaps they gave us some counsel which came from God. Perhaps they helped you somehow.

We ought not to deny the reality of angels in our lives. But, we ought to deny their importance. However real may be our encounters with angels, they are not to receive the honor or glory. Rather, Jesus is. Angels are not our savior. Jesus is our savior. He is better than the angels. Let us look to Him and worship Him.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 25, 2009 by Steve Brandon.
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