

Message Three: Laying the Foundation, Part III

Hebrews 1:8-14 — Understanding Hebrews Series, Part 3

By Escape the Mustard Tree

Introduction

Two weeks now we have been standing in Hebrews chapter one, and I told you at the start of this series that this would take patience — that most churches rush past this chapter, and that rushing is exactly what we are refusing to do. Week one gave us the Son's preeminence and the coronation of Psalm 2. Week two gave us the sonship-means-rulership argument from 2 Samuel 7, and the present, painful fact that fallen angelic powers currently hold a dominion that was never rightfully theirs.

This morning we finish the chapter. Four more pieces come together — a wedding song, a lament that turns to hope, a coronation oath, and a closing sentence about angels that quietly flips the whole argument on its head. By the end of this message, you will see that every single quotation in Hebrews chapter one — all seven of them — has been circling the same target from the very first verse. And once that target comes into full view, you will understand why the first chapter is the foundation for all that follows.

I. A Wedding Song for a King — Psalm 45

Look at Hebrews 1:8-9, where the fifth Old Testament quotation appears: "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.'"

Notice the pattern building across this chapter. Verse 5: "For to which of the angels did He ever say..." Verse 6: "when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says..." Verse 7: "of the angels He says..." And now verse 8: "But of the Son He says..." The contrast is deliberate, repeated, hammered home four times in a row. God wants you to see it. And notice something easy to miss in verse 8 itself: the Father is speaking, and He calls the Son "God." If anyone has ever wondered whether Scripture affirms the deity of Christ in plain terms, here it is. God said He is.

This quotation comes from Psalm 45, and it's worth knowing what kind of psalm it is. Psalm 45 is a wedding song — a royal wedding song, written for a king and his bride. Verses 1 through 9 praise the King, the Groom. Verses 10 through 15 turn and address the bride-to-be with instruction for her new life. Verses 16 and 17 close by looking ahead to the King's descendants and His name being remembered forever. David opens this psalm by calling it "a good theme," one that makes his heart overflow. This is not incidental material. This is, by God's own estimation, good — worth every bit of the overflow it produces.

Now notice the word "companions" in verse 9 — "anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions." That Greek word behind "companions" is the same word Hebrews will use again and again for believers — translated "partakers" in chapters 3, 6, and 12. The Son is anointed above His companions, but He has companions. There are others, in view even here, who will share — in a lesser measure, but real nonetheless— in what is being poured out on Him.

And notice what accompanies the anointing in this psalm: garments fragrant with myrrh. Myrrh, in the ancient world, was used to anoint the dead — which is exactly why Nicodemus brought "a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight" to wrap the body of Jesus (John 19:39). The wedding garments of the coming King are shot through with the fragrance of His own burial. That is not a coincidence buried in poetry. That is the pattern of the entire gospel: suffering must always precede glory. There is no oil of gladness apart from the myrrh that came before it.

This is exactly the pattern the writer of Hebrews will unpack later, when he tells us Christ, "in the days of His flesh," offered up prayers and supplications, "learned obedience by the things which He suffered," and only then "became the author of eternal [literally, 'age-lasting'] salvation" (Hebrews 5:7-9). The degree of His humiliation and the degree of His coming exaltation are two sides of one coin. Isaiah said it seven centuries in advance: His visage would be "marred more than any man" — and for that very reason, in the coming day, "kings shall shut their mouths at Him," astonished all over again, but this time by His glory instead of His disfigurement (Isaiah 52:14-15). The scenes that once witnessed His suffering are the very scenes that will one day witness His exaltation.

And this wedding does happen. Turn your mind forward to Revelation 19: "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Revelation 19:7-8). Psalm 45's royal wedding and Revelation 19's marriage of the Lamb are the same event, viewed from two ends of redemptive history. The King who was anointed with myrrh will one day be crowned with many diadems, riding out to judge and make war, and His bride — dressed not in myrrh but in fine linen — will be there to see it.

II. Suffering Before Glory — Psalm 102 and the Eternal Son

The sixth quotation comes in verses 10 through 12: "And: 'You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail.'"

This is drawn from Psalm 102, and the way that psalm opens will surprise you if you've never read the whole thing. The first eleven verses are one of the rawest laments in all of Scripture. The psalmist forgets to eat. He groans aloud. He can't sleep. His enemies mock him. He weeps into his own drink. He feels cast away, forgotten, and his days feel like they're running out. This is a man in the middle of genuine suffering.

Then verse 12 turns — sharply. "But You, O LORD, shall endure forever, and the remembrance of Your name to all generations." The focus moves entirely off the psalmist's pain and onto the eternal, unshaken character of God. And by the time you reach the verses Hebrews quotes —

verses 25 through 27 — the psalm has become fully messianic: the earth will perish, the heavens will wear out like an old coat and be folded up and changed, but the LORD Himself never changes. In the middle of his own suffering, this psalmist lifts his eyes to the one fixed point in the universe.

This is precisely the pattern Peter wants believers to internalize. "Do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12-13). Peter had already said the same thing about Christ Himself in chapter 1 — the prophets were "searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow" (1 Peter 1:11). Suffering, then glory. Never the reverse. And Peter goes further — "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21). If it was necessary for Christ to suffer before entering His glory, it should not surprise us that the same order applies to us.

Now notice why the eternality of Christ matters so much here — why the author of Hebrews reaches for a text that calls the Son "LORD," Creator, unchanging while the very heavens wear out. Peter tells us that scoffers will one day mock the delay of Christ's coming, saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation" (2 Peter 3:4). Peter's answer is built on exactly this truth: "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us" (2 Peter 3:8-9). The same unchanging Creator quoted in Hebrews 1:10-12 is the guarantee that His promise has not expired — and Peter concludes, "we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13).

III. "Till I Make Your Enemies Your Footstool" — Psalm 110

The seventh and final quotation closes the chapter, verse 13: "But to which of the angels has He ever said: 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool'?" This comes from Psalm 110, and once you lay it beside everything we've already studied, something remarkable happens — every thread in this chapter ties together in a single knot.

Psalm 110:2 — "The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion" — echoes Psalm 2:6, where God declares, "I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion." Psalm 110's promise of an established house echoes God's word to David in 2 Samuel 7:11. Psalm 110's picture of the King ruling among His enemies echoes Psalm 45's royal scepter. Psalm 110:6 — the rod of iron striking the nations — echoes Psalm 2:9 almost word for word. These are not six unrelated proof-texts the author of Hebrews happened to string together. They are seven windows looking into the same room. And the name of that room is regality — the coming, certain, presently-unrealized reign of the Son over the earth.

And Psalm 110 adds one more piece we have not yet met: "The LORD has sworn and will not relent, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'" (Psalm 110:4). Melchizedek appears exactly one other place in the Old Testament — Genesis 14, where he meets Abraham

returning from battle as "the priest of God Most High," king of Salem, and blesses him: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth" (Genesis 14:18-19). A king who is also a priest. That combination — King and Priest in one person — is unheard of anywhere else in the Old Testament economy, where kings came from Judah and priests came from Levi, and the two offices were kept strictly apart.

Hold onto that name. We will spend a great deal of time with Melchizedek when we reach chapters 5 through 7 of this letter. For now, simply notice this: Christ is presently functioning as a priest — but not yet as Melchizedek was, a King-Priest, seated on a throne. Right now He ministers in the heavenly sanctuary on the basis of His own shed blood, after the pattern of Aaron, interceding for His people. The day Psalm 110 describes — when He sits at the Father's right hand until His enemies become His footstool, and then rises to rule — is the day He steps forward as the great King-Priest after the order of Melchizedek, seated simultaneously on His own throne in heaven and on David's throne in Jerusalem. Two offices, held now only in promise, to be exercised together on the same day.

IV. Ministering Spirits — Hebrews 1:14 and the Turn Toward the Warning

Now look at how the chapter closes, verse 14: "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" After thirteen verses spent showing angels are lesser than the Son, the author lands one final blow: angels are not just lesser in rank — they are presently on assignment to serve you. "Sent forth to minister" for "those who will inherit salvation." The created sons of God are dispatched to serve the redeemed people of God who are going to inherit a salvation angels themselves do not possess.

That phrase — "will inherit salvation" — is doing important work, and it's worth pausing on before we move forward, because Hebrews is going to use the word "salvation" throughout this letter in a very specific sense. Peter opens his first letter the same way, laying out three tenses of salvation at once: a salvation already accomplished — "begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3); a salvation still future — "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you... ready to be revealed in the last time" (vv. 4-5); and a present pilgrim walk lived in light of both. Hold that three-part framework. It is exactly the lens Hebrews will hand us as this letter unfolds — and it is why, starting next week, this letter stops describing Christ's throne and starts warning us not to drift away from the hope of sharing it.

V. The Sabbath Still Remains

One more thread deserves a mention before we close, even though we'll return to it in full later in this series. Six days of labor, one day of rest — that rhythm is stamped into the Old Testament from Genesis to Sinai and forward, called a "sign" between God and His people (Exodus 31:13, 17). A sign

always points to something future. The weekly Sabbath was never the point in itself; it was a pointer.

Hebrews will pick this up directly in chapter 4: "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest" (Hebrews 4:9-11). The six days of creation and the seventh-day rest that follows them in Genesis are not just ancient history — they are the pattern for the coming Messianic Era, the age when the earth finally, fully enters the rest it has never yet known, under the reign of the King these seven Old Testament quotations have been describing all along. We will camp out in that chapter later. For now, just notice: even the calendar was preaching this sermon before the author of Hebrews ever picked up his pen.

VI. Applying the Finished Foundation

So — three messages, one chapter. What do we walk away with?

First, hold the two truths of this chapter together the way Scripture holds them together: suffering, then glory. Never the reverse, never suffering as an accident to be resented rather than a pattern to be trusted. If it was true for the Bridegroom, anointed with myrrh before He was anointed with the oil of gladness, it will be true for His bride. When trials come, you are not off the map Scripture drew for you — you are on it.

Second, let Psalm 102 recalibrate where you fix your eyes. The psalmist did not deny his suffering; he simply refused to let it be the last word. Verse 12 was his turn: "But You, O LORD, shall endure forever." Whatever your life holds for you, you have the same turn available. The earth wears out like a garment. He does not.

Third, remember Hebrews 1:14 the next time you feel small or unprotected. Angels — the very beings this entire chapter has spent thirteen verses exalting above every earthly power — are presently assigned to serve *you*, an heir of salvation. That is not a small thing.

And finally — hold onto the name Melchizedek. We are going to come back to him, and when we do, the author of Hebrews is going to tell us plainly that this subject is "hard to be uttered" because so many believers never grow mature enough to receive it. We are not going to be those believers. We have spent three messages laying a foundation precisely so that when we get there, we will be ready to build on it.

Looking Ahead

Next week, we leave chapter one behind and step into chapter two — the first of Hebrews' five great warnings, the warning against drifting. Everything we have built these past three messages was laid for this moment.