

The Firstborn Son

Hebrews 1:6-9, "But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." 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."

Dear God, thank You for bringing us to this passage. Thank You for sending Christ, who is so much better than the angels, to redeem us. I pray that You will help us to see You better through the message this morning. Help us to praise You more and be more thankful to You for all the great things You have done for us. I pray that You will help us to be attentive to Your word and that You will minister in our hearts today. In Your name, amen.

As we continue in Hebrews, last week's passage in introducing the book, explained how much more revelation we have than the Old Testament saints. The Old Testament saints got a piecemeal revelation as God spoke in various parts and portions, but in Jesus Christ we have a full revelation because God was brought into the world. If you have seen the Son, you have seen the Father. This week the writer continues to demonstrate from the Old Testament why it is clear that Christ is greater than the created beings, even greater than the most powerful created beings which are angels, Christ is clearly greater than they are. With all their power and might they still just have a duty to worship God, a duty to worship Jesus Christ. Also last week raised the theme of Jesus Christ being the only begotten Son of God. Even the picture of the two begettings, that He is the eternally begotten Son who was begotten before the foundation of the world and then He was also begotten today as God says in Psalm 2 and Luke said that happened at the day where Herod and Pilate were conspiring together to kill the anointed of God. There's the picture of the eternally begotten and the begotten in time, just like in this passage there is the picture of the eternally firstborn and the firstborn in time. It is important to remember that the argument being made is being made to the Hebrews and not to pagans. The argument is structured to people who have knowledge, to people who have been given understanding, to the people who have been going to the synagogue and hearing reading from the Old Testament week by week. So the writer of Hebrews drives the use of the Old Testament differently than how Paul used it at Mars Hill in Athens. And the arguments being made are arguments based on the Jewish understanding so we're going to hear a lot more about angels than we typically consider because in a lot of ways the Jews worshipped angels. So the writer of Hebrews is saying that angels are types in power, they are insignificant compared to Jesus Christ. That's why it uses terms like firstborn because they understood the writings long before Christ that the firstborn was the Messiah. So the terms here and arguments used here are important to understand that he is choosing those arguments to target the mistakes the Jews are making. With that let's go to verse 6.

Verse 6, "But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." It starts with "But when He again". It sounds like He is bringing Him into the world again, but I think

that's just a bad translation. The word order is translated oddly. The same word order is translated in other places 'but again' making the again apply to when He was brought into the world. He's making his argument go further. I think it is more correctly translated the way the KJV translates it, 'And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world.' I think that's a better handling of the Greek. He made the point that Christ was there from the beginning of the world because all things were made through Him and now He is making the same point in a different way which is why the word translated 'again' could be translated 'furthermore'. So when He brings the firstborn into the world, and the word translated 'firstborn' is related to begotten but only indirectly. This would not just mean the first born as the one who is born first, but it also relates to the first born in authority as well. The firstborn has the authority. Jacob was the firstborn of Isaac even though he was born second, he was born after Esau. Judah became the firstborn of Jacob even though Reuben and Levi and Simeon were all born before him because firstborn isn't just that you were born first, but it is of the ones who were born you have preeminence. That's what it means to be the firstborn, which is typically the firstborn, but not always the firstborn. It says in Colossians 1:15-16, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him." So the idea of being preeminent over all things, He is the firstborn and existing before anything else, He is the firstborn. He's firstborn because He was brought into created order first because He existed before the created order. In the Old Testament it was also a term for the Messiah and it was widely accepted by the Jewish scholars at the time who had written before Hebrews was written that Psalm 89, when it refers to the firstborn, that it's referring to the Messiah. Psalm 89:20-29, "I have found My servant David; With My holy oil I have anointed him, With whom My hand shall be established; Also My arm shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not outwit him, Nor the son of wickedness afflict him. I will beat down his foes before his face, And plague those who hate him. "But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him, And in My name his horn shall be exalted. Also I will set his hand over the sea, And his right hand over the rivers. He shall cry to Me, 'You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.' Also I will make him My firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth. My mercy I will keep for him forever, And My covenant shall stand firm with him. His seed also I will make to endure forever, And his throne as the days of heaven." So just like we saw the same picture that He was eternally begotten, He was also begotten at the day of resurrection. The same idea is in Psalm 89. Here He is saying He's the firstborn of all creation, but in Psalm 89 it says when He cries out You are my Father, my Rock and my salvation, that God makes Him the firstborn. Christ is to be made the firstborn once He cries out. The idea of firstborn there is that He's the ruler of all the kings, He's the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. There's a point where He is the firstborn before creation and there's a point of time at the resurrection where He is made the firstborn. Jesus Christ is the picture of being born again. Just like we talked about last week with being begotten. He was begotten eternally and He was begotten on the day of His resurrection. He was firstborn and was made the firstborn on the day of His resurrection. Jesus Christ was born again just as we have to be born again in order to enter the kingdom of God. But there is also a second time that He becomes the firstborn when He is resurrected from the dead. In Scripture there are a few places calls Him the firstborn from the dead such as Revelation 1:5, "And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood." Just as we have to be born again from being dead in our sins and trespasses, Jesus Christ was born again from the dead and He was the firstborn. It is pretty clear that this is intentional language to testify that just as His body must be born again to receive the kingdom of God, that He had to be. John 3:3, "Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."" Christ sees the kingdom of God because He is firstborn from the dead. That's what He ascends to the Father and Daniel 7

comes to pass. And as it says in Psalm 2:7-8, "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.'" That's when He comes to the Ancient of Days, when He is the firstborn from the dead. That's when God the Father gives Him all the kingdoms of the earth and the ends of the earth are His possession. Again, the writer of Hebrews is making the case that Jesus Christ was far above all of creation, far above all the angels, far above everyone who is saved, which makes His covenant far better than any other covenant. Moses was not the firstborn, Moses was not given authority over all of the nations of the earth. David was not the firstborn of creation. He was only given authority from the river Euphrates to the River of Egypt, and that was tiny compared to the dominion that the true Son of David received. Christ is far excelling everyone else, every created being, every prophet He far excels, every angel He far excels. He is the firstborn. So "He says "Let all the angels of God worship Him." This is a quote from Psalm 97. Psalm 97:1-9, "The LORD reigns; Let the earth rejoice; Let the multitude of isles be glad! Clouds and darkness surround Him; Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. A fire goes before Him, And burns up His enemies round about. His lightnings light the world; The earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the LORD, At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. The heavens declare His righteousness, And all the peoples see His glory. Let all be put to shame who serve carved images, Who boast of idols. Worship Him, all you gods. Zion hears and is glad, And the daughters of Judah rejoice Because of Your judgments, O LORD. For You, LORD, are most high above all the earth; You are exalted far above all gods." As you notice in this translation, it is not 'all you angels', instead it is 'all you gods' which is translated from Elohim. The writer of Hebrews, even though he is writing to Jews, he doesn't quote the Hebrew Bible. Instead he quotes directly from the Septuagint from Hebrew to Greek. The translation from Hebrew to Greek doesn't translate it Elohim, which the normal translation of that is God, they translate it as angels because they would translate things based on their understanding so they would say that the gods of false gods were translated angels, but they aren't consistent with that either. So why use that translation? Why use a translation that is clearly incorrect from the literal Hebrew words? Because it makes a point that is true even if it's not a perfect translation. The word Elohim really means powerful ones, it's saying all the powerful ones worship God so the writer of Hebrews is quoting the Septuagint saying the angels are powerful beings, but as powerful beings they are still commanded to worship God. Like in Psalm 82:6-7, "I said, "You are gods, And all of you are children of the Most High. But you shall die like men, And fall like one of the princes." Christ used this to argue that calling Him god could not be an offense because calling kings of the earth gods was done by the Psalmist. The Old Testament uses that term god to refer to kings and rulers of the earth, to anybody with power. The point here is that angels have real power, but what they are supposed to do is worship God. I think the reason it is translated angels is because angels are clearly more powerful than any king of earth. Consider who was the most powerful king when Assyria came in and invaded Israel and destroyed the northern kingdom and they invade Judah. They have this huge army outside of Judah that are besieging Judah. 2 Chronicles 32:21, "Then the LORD sent an angel who cut down every mighty man of valor, leader, and captain in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned shamefaced to his own land. And when he had gone into the temple of his god, some of his own offspring struck him down with the sword there." We know from 2 Kings 19:35 that that one angel on that one night killed 185,000 people. David was a mighty warrior and he killed his thousands over days of battle, but angels are on a different scale. The most powerful king killed thousands, but an angel killed 185,000 in one night. There is no question that angels have far greater power than earthly warriors or kings, far more powerful, they are on a different scale. So why translate it angels? Because the point is that Christ is more powerful than these beings that are far more powerful than any earthly king. It doesn't change it so that the kings of earth are not supposed to worship God, they are, but even angels who are far more significant and

powerful than they are, they are supposed to worship God as well.

Verse 7, "And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire." "And of the angels He says." That is what God the Father said about God the Son, that all the angels were to worship Him, that they were lower than Christ because they were not the firstborn. But rather God described them in Psalm 104:1-6, "Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty, Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain. He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters, Who makes the clouds His chariot, Who walks on the wings of the wind, Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire. You who laid the foundations of the earth, So that it should not be moved forever, You covered it with the deep as with a garment; The waters stood above the mountains." The point of this Psalm is that God is the Creator of all things, that Jesus Christ, because we found out last week that He is the manifestation, the brightness of the glory of God when the only things we see about the Father are through the Son and here He is creating all things and we see exactly the position of angels with all their power and with all their might. They are spirits, they are His ministers are a flame of fire. Psalm 104 is putting the context of angels in the context of creation. The Creator is far greater than the angels that are part of His creation. He "makes His angels spirits." The word translated spirit can be translated wind or breath. The idea is that He made them without physical substance, His angels are not flesh and blood like the rest of His creatures, they are the spirit. He did not make angels to be bound to the earth like we are with our bodies with dependencies on things like air. We have to eat and breathe and we are bound by gravity and all these things that bind us that give us less power than angels so part of the greatness of God is that He could create these beings that are spirits. The word translated 'angel' means much the same as the Greek word that angel is transliterated from. It means 'deputy' or 'messenger', but clearly here we know that he is talking about heavenly angels because they are spirits and no human being can be called simply a spirit. "His ministers a flame of fire." In Hebrew, for emphasis it is common to repeat the same concept but with different words. Before God said His deputies were spirits and now He says His ministers are fire. By the way, this verse is close to the Septuagint but it is not the same as the Septuagint. The Septuagint translates it with a greater emphasis on blazing rather than on fire, and arguably the Hebrew has a greater emphasis on blazing as well rather than on the fire, but the Greek translation puts the emphasis on the fire. Fire has the same characteristics as spirit, there is no physical substance to them. You can't take those flames and hold them. We know that fire is dependent upon fuel, oxygen and heat, but angels are fire in a different way. They are blazing forth in a different way. One of the types of angels like Seraphim. In Isaiah 6 where you see God, the Lord Christ high and lifted up and the angels are encircling the Lord chanting holy, holy, holy day and night, the word means "to be burning". Those are Seraphim flying around Him and Seraphim are literally called in Hebrew, flames of fire. This is what it represents, a fire, a flame, there are flames of fire that are flying around Christ saying holy, holy holy. This is how His ministers are flames of fire. But I don't think that is the reason that this verse is quoted, the writer of Hebrews isn't making a point that they are flames of fire, He is making a point that their position is not to rule, but to be messengers. They are not a king or rulers, angels are clearly ministers and ministers are not above a king. The word translated minister is not deacon. It is not about service like the word deacon is transliterated from, but here it means it is a worker of the people both in Hebrew and in Greek. In other words, it is what the king decrees and then they make it known to the people. That's what a minister does and like in England there is a Prime Minister because historically, even though it is not true now, his position was to cause the will of the monarch to be affected upon the people. That's why we don't have ministers in the same sense, because we have no monarch. Angels are clearly inferior to Jesus Christ because their purpose is not to have

their own will, but to accomplish the will of the King of Kings. That is how God's kingdom is set up, God the Father decrees and says to kill the people in the army of Syria and the minister of the army of God goes and kills 185,000 in one night. They are ministers, they do not do their own will, they do the will of the monarch. So angels are clearly inferior to Christ because they don't get to make the decisions, they implement the decisions that are made.

Verses 8-9, "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." "But to the Son He says". Notice God the Father, when He talks of the angels, He talks about them. When He talks to the angels, the point is to tell them what to do. He doesn't treat the Son the same way. Just like Jesus Christ said, when you were My servants I told you what to do, but now I call you friends because I'm bringing you in and I'm telling you what I am about to do. God the Father treats angels differently than He treats the Son. He speaks to the Son of what He is going to do. He speaks to Jesus Christ, not just commanding Him what to do, but telling Him the promises that He has for Him and the good things He has for Him So then He quotes Psalm 45:7, which we sang earlier. This Psalm starts saying it is a contemplation and this is what those who went before us were to contemplate. We are to contemplate what God is saying here, this wasn't supposed to be clear to the Jews and there still may be aspects that we don't understand, but we have a lot more knowledge and ability to understand it. We have so much more understanding than those who were of the generation of Solomon, but that's who this is written to. So let me read Psalm 45:3-9, "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." The context is of a conquering king who conquers not because of overwhelming force, but because of truth, because of humility and because of righteousness. We can look back and we read about in Daniel 2 where this stone was cut without hands that would grow to fill the whole earth and here's how we find out that it's cut without hands. It's not cut with the sword, it's not cut with a chisel or an ax, it's cut with truth, humility, and righteousness, that's how Christ established His kingdom, that's how He came, that's how He's conquering. That's the context that He says, "Your throne O God". The angels were ministers, but Christ has a throne. The word is a transliteration of the Greek and it means the seat of power, it means a throne. It can be the physical throne or it can be the idea that you have that position. It can be the power the chair represents. Christ has His own throne, no angel has a throne. The angels minister for the one with authority and the One in authority is Christ. And the Father would never call an angel God. Theos isn't like Elohim, which is used in the Old Testament to refer to gods that are not God, it's used to refer to kings. This is Theos, God the Father never refers to angels as gods, not with that Greek term. Then it says, "Is forever and ever." His power is eternal, literally, into ages of ages is what it says. Tuesday morning we were talking about if that means His power goes back. No, that's not what it means, it means that it goes forward as far as we can imagine. It continues forever. Once God establishes it, there's no end to that throne and kingdom, it will go on for ages and ages. Now the kingdom is described, "A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom." Like Christ rides forth with truth, humility and righteousness, and the sign of the kingdom being there is righteousness. That's what the scepter is, it's a symbol of your authority. Even some parliaments, a lot

of US congresses continue to have a scepter, they have the big gavel, but a lot of them continue to use scepters. The scepter is to say they are the one with authority, they are the head of the house and when they adjourn the house they hold the scepter to say it is their authority. In Christ's case, the symbol that He is ruling and reigning is righteousness, that's the symbol. The word literally just means branch or cudgel. While it is not the same Hebrew word that is used for Moses' rod, it is still very close to the same idea. Moses' rod was the sign of the powers that he was granted by God. For instance, Exodus 9:22-23, "Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt—on man, on beast, and on every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt." And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven; and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire darted to the ground. And the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt." The scepter of Moses and the sign of Moses' authority was established by the signs and wonders that he could do by God enabling His rod. That demonstrated his authority. Consider how different that is than Christ; the sign of His ruling is righteousness. It's not like Moses where it does wonders, not physical wonders. Jesus Christ's kingdom is known because of righteousness. Consider immediately after the sermon on the mount in Matthew 7:28-29, "And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." He had declared what righteousness was and they sat there astonished because the sign of His authority was the fact that He understood and walked in righteousness, it was the fact that He called people to righteousness. This is the picture of His kingdom. Or 1 Peter 2:21-22, "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH"." He committed no sin and deceit was not found in His mouth. Righteousness was why the Pharisees and the Sadducees wanted to kill Him, it was why He was the Lamb of God that's described in Revelation when the saints cry out who is worthy to take the scroll and the Lamb of God comes who was slain not for His own sins, but for the sins of the world. He was found worthy to open the seals because He had no sin, righteousness is the basis for His authority, righteousness is how He establishes His kingdom and righteousness is the sign that His kingdom and authority are there. It's not just the sign of establishing the kingdom, it's the sign of His continued power, it's why it is so terrible when people say things have never been worse, because they are rejected the kingdom of God because they are saying there is no righteousness in the world and it is absurd, but yet people say it all the time and to say it is to deny Jesus Christ is King, it is to deny the resurrection of God. Any measure you go beyond like a century, righteousness is clearly on the rise. The gospel is being preached where it was never preached before and light is being shown all over the world. Even where we minister in Nigeria, with all the problems it is far different than it was a hundred years ago, they had never heard the name of Jesus Christ there. Don't think that righteousness isn't increasing, that is ridiculous. It's easy to see the blasphemy that is happening in various places in the world and you go to those places and realize the Bible wasn't even there 200 years ago. They were eating each other, they had no sense of righteousness, they had no constraint that comes from the shining of the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. To think that righteousness is not on the rise is absurd and requires willful blindness, it requires willful rejecting the scepter of the kingdom of God and the establishment of the kingdom of God. You go, polygamy throughout the whole world is way down, making carved images that you bow down to is considered foolishness in most of the world, the idea that human life has value, which is an idea that comes from Christianity, throughout the world people now consider human life to have value. It doesn't mean that there are places where they don't, but 2,000 years ago almost no one considered human life to have value. Righteousness is increasing because Christ is ruling and it is the sign that Christ is ruling. If you say things are getting worse and worse you are saying Christ is not ruling and that is not true. Even as mankind rebels against that idea by killing their children, they don't kill each other very often once they are born. We need to think about it the other way, it used to be

not that long ago that murder wasn't considered that seriously. I remember reading five or six years ago in the original Presbyterian Book of order, right after the Reformation came to Scotland and they talked about how you restore people, and specifically for murder. Once someone murders someone, of course the state wasn't going to do anything, so the church had to put them out for at least forty days and after forty days they had to stand at the door of the church holding whatever they killed someone with and everyone walked by to see that they were confessing to killing someone, and then they had to wait forty more days and do it again, stand in front of the church and have everyone pass by and see that they were a murderer and after that they would be restored to the church. Do even pagans treat murder like that anymore? Understand, that's an effect of the gospel over the last 450 years. Jesus Christ is reigning and even if you go to Nigeria, they may not care about rape, but they do care about murder. A hundred years ago they didn't care about either. We need to understand and believe and see the scepter of Christ's kingdom. The increasing righteousness in the world is the proof and sign that Jesus Christ is King. Again, to say things have never been worse is just absurd and it is a rejection that Jesus Christ has received all authority in heaven and in earth. "You have loved righteousness." The word translated loved matches the Septuagint, but it is stronger than the word in the Hebrew. The word in the Hebrew is more like filia, to have affection for, this is agapao. Christ was not just affectionate towards righteousness, He has a zeal and passion for righteousness. Righteousness is not just doing the right thing, the word also includes being just. Christ had a zeal for justice and the other things God that Father would have Him to do. That's the sign of His kingdom, righteousness, and it's why He received the kingdom because He loved righteousness "and hated lawlessness." Here the Greek word and the Hebrew word translated hated have about the same level of zeal. This is to despise it, to consider it your enemy. The Hebrew word means a wrong while it was translated into Greek to be without law. It's not just to do wrong, it's to say there is no law constraining you and Christ despised that idea. Despising something doesn't mean that you ignore it, it means that you attempt to do things about it and you actively work against it. You may not have the means to stop it, but you are to have the desire to stop it. Jesus didn't keep confronting the Pharisees and Sadducees because He thought that He would persuade them, He knew it would end in His death, He confronted them because they were exalting their traditions over the law of God and His desire was to stop it because He despised lawlessness. It's very clear that He realized He didn't think He would persuade them, but because He despised lawlessness He continued to speak. Do you consider lawlessness your enemy? That not accepting the law of God is to be in rebellion to Him. He gives us a new heart so that He can write the law on our hearts so we can walk in lawfulness rather than we can rebel against the law. Understand, we still have an old man, we still have an old man that wants to reject the law of God and reject what God has told us to do, that wants to be lawless. Do you hate that inside yourself? Do you just go, oh, I just kind of don't like that I have this sin or do you despise it? Do you confront it and deal with it? This is what it means to despise lawlessness. Do you have zeal against the areas in your life that you are not conforming to the law of God? The easiest way to embrace lawlessness is to say either it is too hard to understand what God said about a subject or to specifically work not to look because then you don't have to deal with it. That is to be lawless. We have a duty to actually consider it if we hate lawlessness and despise it like God despises it. We don't excuse the fact by saying we are too busy doing other things to study the Word. If you love righteousness you seek it, if you hate lawlessness you hate the fact that you have areas in your life that you don't know what God desires of you. Understand it's really easy for us to see this in other people, ignoring other aspects of the law. But if we have a passion for righteousness, we should desire to see lawlessness in ourselves, to see those areas in our life where we are not submitting to God in. We all have them. Do you cry out to God for Him to show you your sin? Do you cry out to God for how to defeat the old man, how to fight against Him? We are either fighting sin or sin will destroy us, those are your two choices. Christ despised lawlessness, do you despise lawlessness? May we not deceive

ourselves and may we all grow into greater love for righteousness and a greater hatred for wickedness and lawlessness. Then he puts in "therefore". Because He loved righteousness and because He hated righteousness, there is a response. "God Your God." God does this for God the Son, He "has anointed Him". That word anoint is creole where we get verb form of Christ from. Because of His love for righteousness and his hatred for lawlessness God the Father has appointed Him to a greater position, a greater position than Moses. Moses wasn't anointed, we have seen that Moses didn't have the same love for righteousness and hatred for lawlessness that Christ did. He came up with all kinds of excuses why he shouldn't have to go confront Pharaoh and why he shouldn't lead the Israelites. Christ was anointed and He was anointed "with the oil of gladness." The word here is stronger than the word for joy. Sometimes in other places it's translated exceeding joy. This is great joy, this means more like jumping for joy. He had anointed Him with the oil of jumping for joy. This is what Christ received, He received the oil of great joy. This is His mark, this is what He was given. I do think we need to reconcile this with Isaiah 53:3-4, "He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted." I think the reconciliation that He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief anointed with the oil of gladness has two aspects to it. It is not that He was filled with sorrow and grief because of the many things that happened to Him that were sorrowful through His public ministry. He was a man where people tried to kill Him when He was under the age of two. His whole life He was persecuted by His brothers and mother. He was a man of sorrows. In His public ministry people desired the healings and the food rather than righteousness, that was a sorrow to Him. He mourned that people couldn't see the power that He had with Lazarus. He was a man with sorrows because at the cross everyone else abandoned Him, He was alone, all the sheep had scattered. There's many examples of how He was a man of sorrow, but that shouldn't make us think that He was depressed. Christ still had the joy of the Holy Spirit through it all. It's the same picture that You have when You see Peter and John be beaten and they leave and they rejoice. They were of sorrow, it wasn't fun to be beaten, but they turned around and rejoice because it still could not steal their joy. They rejoiced because they were found worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. He was a man of sorrows, not in His own spirit, but in the things that happened to Him. There is another aspect of the reconciliation, that reconciliation of the idea that He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, also the fullness of the anointing doesn't happen until He is resurrected. He suffered those things for the joy that was set before Him, He suffered those things because He was promised joy. The anointing of the oil of gladness happens when He receives His throne, after He is despised by men and rejected, after He is murdered and after He rises from the dead. They murdered Him, the people came and all men came and desired for Him to be crucified because He loved righteousness and despised lawlessness. He received the oil of gladness because of that. He receives the oil of gladness "more than Your companions." He is the most joyful person, but understand His companions also received joy. It's not that instead of His companions that He was anointed with the oil of gladness, it's more than His companions. He received it more, but every single one of His companions receives the oil of gladness, every one of them. Jesus Christ, because He loves righteousness and because He hates wickedness more than anybody else, He received more of that anointing, but every one of His companions receive it as well. Who are His companions? His companions are those who share in His work, that's what it means. It means to partake in and share with Him. Are you a companion of Christ? Are you part of His kingdom? If you are part of His kingdom there is a promise of the oil of gladness. That makes perfect sense why He would have more, He is the bridegroom, but we are the bride. We are supposed to have the oil of gladness too. Joy is an intrinsic part of the kingdom of God, but the amount of joy we have is directly related to how much we love righteousness and hate wickedness. It is one of the great hypocrisies of Satan to pretend that sin will make you happy, it hasn't

made him happy and it will not make those who pursue it joyful. He goes and talks to Eve and says you can be like God and you will be so happy and joyful. That's always what Satan says and what happened? She dies because of it. Satan sells sin by saying it will bring the oil of gladness and it never does, it brings death. The wages of sin is death, it is not joy, it is not gladness, it is not happiness, it is not blessedness, it is death, that's what it brings. Satan tries to sell it that way and sinners try to sell it that way, come join me in my sin and you will be happy, you'll be happy like I'm happy, you can be rich and happy like me because I'm rich. Then they commit suicide the next day, this happens all the time. Join me in my sin and you will be happy and joyful, it doesn't make you joyful. The result of loving righteousness and hating wickedness, that's what makes you joyful. To love wickedness makes you dead, makes you receive the wages of sin. You see it all the time when people say what a blessing it is to be married and how great their marriage is and the next day they file for divorce. This happens all the time because they are saying to look at how happy they are because they are lying to themselves and saying sin produces happiness. It doesn't, it produces misery. The drunkard will be singing and dancing moments before he is getting sick and passing out. He's saying his sin is bringing joy, but it doesn't bring joy it brings misery. Choose the sin and it's always the same. The wages of sin is death, the wages of sin is never the lie that the world will tell you it's never the lie Satan will tell you and it's never the lie that your flesh will bring you. The answer is, no it won't, loving righteousness and hating lawlessness will make you happy. Don't believe the lies you can tell yourself. The other thing to note is that joy is from God. As Christ said at the last supper in John 16:22, "Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you." God will give His disciples joy and God is the One that gave Christ joy. If you are in disobedience to God, it's like a father with a child, the child who does what is good in the sight of his father receives blessing and the child that does what is bad in the eyes of the child will receive the rod of chastisement. Which one makes them happy? Sin is not the path to happiness, sin is the path to sorrow. Seek righteousness with greater fervency, hate wickedness with greater fervency and you will have more joy. Christ did this perfectly so He has perfect joy. Be like Christ and you will have more joy.

Applications

1. Jesus Christ is the firstborn over all creation. Colossians 1:18, "And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence." The response to Him being the firstborn of the dead is that we are to give Him the preeminence. God made Him the firstborn so He would be over kings, how much more should He be over us and as His bride how much more should He be over our desires? How much more should the desire of our life be to exalt His name? Do you treat Him like He is the firstborn, that He is to have preeminence in all things?
2. Angels with far greater glory than we have but yet they are required to worship Jesus Christ. How much more duty do we have to worship Him? Think about it, you see in Revelation where John sees an angel and he falls down before the angel and the angel says to not worship him and instead worship God. This is the common response to angels, to fall down before them. Men see an angel and they go prostrate which is what the word worship comes from, they fall down before them. If men would do that to angels, how much more should we do that for Christ because Christ is far more powerful than the angels. As we come before Jesus Christ, do we picture Him as it says in Isaiah 6? In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two

he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke." This is how angels treat Christ, how much more should we be treating Him with a zeal to see Him as He is and our response to Christ should be like Isaiah's. "So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts." Do you hate the sin that's around you? Do you hate the perversity that's around you? Do you do anything about it? That's the response to worshipping God, that's the response to saying that Christ has value, that's the response we are supposed to have for seeing Him high and lifted up, to seeing Him on His throne. We are supposed to respond by saying we are undone by caring about our own sin and also caring about the sin of the people around us. The one who is forgiven much loves much. Do you see how much you have been forgiven? The more we recognize our sin the greater zeal we will have for worshipping our Savior because the more you will recognize what He did for you, the more your response will be to worship. The less we love righteousness the less we will see our sin and the less we see our sin the less we will worship because we won't say we have been forgiven much and desire to know what righteousness is and a normal response to that would be a greater desire to worship God.

3. If angels with their glory were created for the purpose of serving Jesus Christ and through Him serve those who will inherit salvation as it says later in this chapter, if that is their purpose to serve God and that was what their existence was supposed to be about, how much more should we structure our existence about that? Angels are powerful beings and we are weak and in desperate need of help. How much more should we serve Him than angels? We are His bride, we are His helpmeet. How much greater duty do we have to serve him?
4. Are we furthering the kingdom of God? The way we are to further the kingdom of God is the same way that Christ establishes and builds His kingdom, by truth, humility, and righteousness. By the same way that He designed His kingdom is by righteousness, His scepter is a scepter of righteousness. These are the tools that we are to use to build His kingdom. His kingdom is conquered with truth, humility and righteousness and those are the tools that we are to use to conquer His kingdom. It's easy to think that short cuts will be more beneficial to the kingdom of God. I know of so many churches that hide sin because they think if they declare sin that someone in the church had it will bring shame on the kingdom of God and it will cause the kingdom of God to decrease. No, just the opposite, truth is what causes the kingdom of God to expand. If we just show everybody how much better we are and if we look down on people so they adopt our ways, they join in our special club that will expand the kingdom of God. No because it is lacking in humility and that is pride, it won't expand the kingdom of God. Maybe if we smuggle Bibles into a foreign country against the law we will further the kingdom because they will have the Word of God. But God says His kingdom comes by righteousness not by lawlessness. Are you furthering the kingdom of God with the tools that God has given us to further the kingdom of God? Truth, humility, and righteousness.
5. Do you have zeal and passion for righteousness? The surest sign that you truly love righteousness is that you pursue the means that God gave you to obtain it. He has given us means. Do you desire God's Word? Like it said in Peter, are you like a newborn babe that desires, hungers, and cries out for his mother's milk? That's what you are supposed to be like to the Word of God. Or as it says in Psalm 1:2, "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night." Do you think

about God's word only when you are gathered with other people? Do you think about God's Word only when you gather your family together to read it? Are you meditating on it day and night? This is how you develop a greater love for righteousness, is that you love God's word. Do you desire to be encouraged and to encourage? Hebrews 10:24-25, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." Those who love righteousness don't just not forsake the gathering together, but they do more than that, they exhort one another, they stir up love and good works. This is one of the means, as we come together as a church on Sunday and we assemble together, we're supposed to be inspiring each other to have a greater love for righteousness by exhorting one another to love and good works. Is that we are doing as a church? Is that what you come here for? Or do you come here for a way to kill your Sabbath, you have a day you are to set aside so you have to do something to kill the time? Or do you do it because it feels good and is comfortable. Do you say the reason we come together is to grow in our righteousness? Do you cry out to God for wisdom when you don't understand? You don't just throw up your hands and say you don't understand. If you truly love righteousness you go to God and ask Him to show you what His ways are. James 1:5, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." You can't just say you don't understand this. Cry out to God and He says if you ask, not as a double-minded man, but if you truly ask desiring it and seeking it, He will show you what it is. Do you love righteousness? Things you don't understand, do you go to God for them? If you love righteousness, do you cry out to God when you are weak? Philippians 4:6-7, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." When you are weak and falling do you cry out to God? Those who love righteousness, this is what we are commanded to do. We're anxious for nothing, instead we cry out to God and cry out to Him, that's a sign that you love righteousness. You deal with your sin as it says in 2 Timothy 2:21-22, "Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Are you fleeing those areas of temptation of sin? This is what it looks like to love righteousness, this is what it looks like to seek joy because God gives joy to those who seek righteousness. Do you control your desires and what you desire and what things you care about? Mark 4:18-19, "Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful." If you do not desire the right things, the word will get choked out. You need to be focused on the right things, you need to care about the right things. If you care about the things of the world, the word will be choked out. You can't love righteousness and be concerned about the things of the world instead the things of God. You will control your time. The easiest way to not love righteousness is to let other things consume your time, to let the minor things outweigh the major things. Ephesians 5:15-16, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Do you redeem the time, do you look at how you are spending your time and ask yourself, are you spending your time pursuing righteousness? Are you spending your time serving God? This is how you love righteousness, this is how you hate wickedness. This very much goes back to the first one. Desiring to know the Word of God and to meditate on it. If you love righteousness you don't take your eyes off of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 12:1-2,

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” When we look at the world rather than looking at Christ we will end up loving wickedness and hating righteousness. When we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, that’s how we love righteousness.

6. Are you seeking joy? This is very related to the previous application, but I wanted to bring it out separately because of the importance that we should place on it. The prosperity gospel says that you will get rich in material possessions but the true gospel says that you will become rich in the things that really matter, righteousness, peace and joy. It’s not that we don’t preach a prosperity gospel, but what is prosperity? The thing that everyone in the world seeks after is joy. The person who seeks all kind of wealth seeks it because they think it will make them happy. Paul could be stoned and still be happy, he could be shipwrecked and still be happy. He believed in prosperity if you believe in prosperity rightly. Peace and joy comes from the gospel, it is the gospel of peace, it is the gospel of joy. The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy. Seek righteousness and you will have greater peace, seek righteousness and you will have greater joy. People don’t seek righteousness, but everybody wants peace. They frequently pretend that they do not, but they do. They pretend like they don’t but that is because they cannot find it. Everybody wants joy and wants to be happy. There are people that seek misery because they think being miserable will make them happy, but there is only one true path to happiness and that is to seek after Christ and be like Christ and love righteousness and hate lawlessness. 1 Thessalonians 1:6, “And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.” When we receive the Holy Spirit, He is the spirit of joy. This is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, love and joy is what it starts with. If you want joy in this world, God has told us how, love righteousness and hate wickedness. This can only be done when God gives you a new heart, but even when you have a new heart, this is how you avoid misery. Again, it doesn’t mean that we will not have sorrows in our lives and that we will not have griefs, but as it says in 1 Peter 4, that when we partake in Christ’s sufferings we will partake in His glory and we will be glad with exceeding joy. The same word that is translated gladness in this passage is the same word used in 1 Peter 4. Seeking righteousness will give you exceeding joy even when you are beaten not for your faults. Are you seeking joy? Are you seeking righteousness?

Let me close in prayer. Oh Lord God, we do thank You for Your word. We thank You for this passage that You have put us in in Hebrews. We do pray that we walk away from it with what we should learn. We do pray that You give us ears to hear the things that are important. Lord, let us be more like Christ. Use this passage to conform us more to the image of Christ, the picture of truth, humility, and righteousness, the pattern of loving righteousness and hating lawlessness. Lord, make that our pattern, may Your kingdom grow here. In Jesus Christ’s name we pray, amen.