

The Son Unchanged (Heb. 1)

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Extracted from Scripture Truth magazine, Volume 4, 1912, page 186.

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There is none to compare with the holy Person in whom God has spoken. He supersedes all that had place before His coming into the world; and in Him we reach finality, for none will supersede Him. But can we speak of *finality* in One whose glories are infinite?

Finality is reached in the sense that no other Person will ever appear, to be the revelation of God; in Christ there is the complete, absolute, and eternal setting forth of all that God is.

But the glories of God are both infinite and eternal. All created magnitudes, however great they may appear when we place them in relation to each other, are small indeed when viewed in reference to Him. All the changes which may occur in the circumstances of responsible creatures, or in the ways and dispensations of time, or in the physical constitution of things, do not produce change in Him.

Here, then, is a fresh field in which we may discover and ponder the glories of Christ. He is the complete revelation of God. In Him God has spoken. The "sundry times" and "divers manners" of the former partial communications have given place to that which is neither circumscribed by the locality or time of its occurrence, nor limited to any manner or way of God's revealing Himself, it is absolute. God hath in these last days spoken to us in (the) Son. Future developments in the history of the world and of creation will produce alterations of administration and changes of form; but the Son will remain unchanged and glorious, the complete unfolding of all that God is. Nothing will or can be added to Him to make God better known.

Finality is truly reached; our hearts are conducted in this marvellous Epistle to the Person who is the adequate revelation of God for the whole vast universe, for all its varied orders of created beings, for all its ages of ages, and for the solution of every question of good and evil. How vast is the range of glory opened up to our awed and adoring hearts as we contemplate the blessedness of the SON.

The first four verses of the chapter under consideration give us a comprehensive survey of His person, and lead us up to the point where He had made purgation of sins, and had taken His position in Manhood at the right hand of the Majesty on high. I say, in Manhood, for this is the great wonder of wonders in God's ways. The glory of God has shone out, the essential being of God is exactly expressed in the Son become Man. The framework of the universe is held up by One now in human form. Purgation for sins, for the moral disaster that has come in by the creature's revolt from God, has been made by the eternal Son in Manhood, Himself sinless, and the revelation of God.

In the fourth verse, after the purgation of sins, He passes beyond the highest orders of created beings, into the place that is native to Him. As the risen Man, entitled so to do by the glory of His person, He sets Himself down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. He is the Personality in the Godhead to whom *in Manhood* is committed the administration of all the rights and purposes of God. The government of angels and of men, the ordering and control of dispensations the final triumph of good over evil, are all in His hands.

Now it is in this connection, I submit, that the rest of the chapter is written; and I think it will be found that the quotations (seven in number) which follow not only involve, each and all, the consideration of our adorable Lord — who is ever the eternal Son — from the point of view of His Manhood in resurrection, but they also present a vista of His unchanged and unchangeable glory from the day when He stepped on to the resurrection platform to the eternal day when time shall be no more. That is, that every passage quoted, read and taken in its own context, brings Christ — who is Son from and to eternity — into view on the ground of resurrection; and they are placed in such an order that they begin with the suggestion (and, as I believe, the statement) of His undiminished glory on the morning when He rose from the dead, continue through the present time to the appearing and kingdom, and forecast His unchanged glory and final triumph at the end. They not only cover His past and present offices, but bring into view "the world to come" so that the writer having brought it into view and having spoken of Christ's position in relation to it, justly describes it in Heb. 2 as "the world to come, *whereof we speak.*" The speaking of it is antecedent to the second chapter, or at any rate to the fifth verse of it, and casts us back upon what has been previously stated. This, as I trust the reader will see, more than suggests that the first chapter brings before us, by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, those glories of Christ which will cover all the exigencies of "the coming age."

We will take the quoted passages in their order. Viewing Christ in His place higher than the angels, the writer — inspired by the Holy Ghost — inquires, "For unto which of the angels said He at any time,

THOU ART MY SON; THIS DAY HAVE I BEGOTTEN THEE?"

All of us know that this quotation is from the second psalm. It is referred to in Paul's address in Antioch (Acts 13: 33). Possibly from our frequent indifference to the context of a passage we have not noticed as we should how the Apostle sums up the story of the Saviour, Jesus, in verses 23-31. In the twenty-third verse he says in introducing Christ to the notice of his hearers, "Of this man's [David's] seed hath God ... raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus" — *and does not quote the second psalm.* Briefly summarizing Christ's rejection in Jerusalem and proclaiming the fact of His death, he states that God raised Him from the dead, and in the thirty-second and thirty-third verses, with that complete story of the dead and risen Saviour before his hearer's minds, he uses the same expression that God has raised up Jesus (not "again," as in the Authorized Version), *and quotes the psalm to illustrate the situation.* Then, in further proof that resurrection from the dead was required to secure everything for God and man, nothing being sure to man that had death in front of it, he quotes the "sure mercies of David." and

other passages.

But let us examine the psalm itself. In verse 2 there is a concerted movement of the authorities against the Lord and against His Christ. Doubtless this federation will be a second time fulfilled in a fast-approaching day; but in Acts 4: 25 this combination is definitely applied in the inspired Scriptures to the rejection of the "holy servant Jesus," by Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the nations, and peoples of Israel. There was therefore a first and partial fulfilment, to say the least, when Christ was rejected and crucified. The sixth verse shows that notwithstanding all this apparent resistance to God's purpose, He goes quietly and resistlessly forward with His plans; for His purposes are to be fulfilled in resurrection and the king is anointed on Zion in full accordance with the holiness of God. But in verses 7 to 9 the Messiah Himself (and I think it is clear that it is from His position as the once rejected but now raised One) declares the decree, and quotes the Lord as saying to Him, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee," etc. I do not think you can apply that to the question of the eternal Sonship of Christ, though He is the eternal Son, and Christianity stands or falls by that truth; nor do I think that the incarnation and birth in Bethlehem are in view there, though He who was born there is the eternal Son, and is called the "Son of the Highest," to whom the throne of David shall be given (Luke 1: 32), and the "Son of God" (ver. 35). But the context of the passage demands that we view it as dating from the moment when all that man had done against Christ was quietly reversed. In resurrection, God salutes the risen Man, and says, "Thou art My Son; *this day* have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me," etc., etc. Did He say to Christ in *the days of His lowly humiliation, and before His death*," Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel?" Yet this is all part of what Jehovah said to Him, which was introduced by the greeting "Thou art My Son." It is consistent with what Christ is and will do in *resurrection*, but we cannot, I think, connect that process of judgment with Christ in the days of His flesh.

The first quotation, then in Hebrews brings us face to face with the Son risen from the dead, unchanged still, greeted as Son in resurrection by God, and emphasizing "this day" as a day of great joy and triumph for God.

The second quotation is:

"I WILL BE TO HIM A FATHER, AND HE SHALL BE TO ME A SON."

This is from 2 Samuel 7: 14. It is a wonderful passage. David is assured by God of the continuation of his kingdom in his "seed" (*cf.* Acts 13: 23; Rom. 1: 3, etc.). God would establish his kingdom, and he would build God's house. In David's mind (*see* 1 Chr. 22. 7-10) this was to have its fulfilment in Solomon; but what was in the mind of God?

Christ is the One who fulfils in His own person all that was typically set forth in David and all that was typically set forth in Solomon. As David, He met and meets all the power of the enemy. As Solomon, He is to sit on David's throne, and rule in peace and equity. The first verse of Psalm 72 combines these two characters of Christ in one. David thrice encountered hostile power. In his private life and capacity he overthrew the lion and the bear. As the representative of his people and for the glory of God he met Goliath. In connection with his throne and kingdom he overthrew seven nations (2 Sam. 8). Thus also Christ. Privately He overcame Satan in the wilderness; on behalf of His people and for God's glory He overcame Satan at the cross, He will subdue the world to His feet in the day of His appearing to take His throne and kingdom. Then, in His Solomon character, with neither adversary nor evil occurrent, will He rule over all Israel and over all the earth.

In passing we may notice the inquiry that would naturally occur to the reader as to the words: "If

he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men," etc. Under this clause Solomon, who was the type of Christ, broke down; but Christ, who is the Antitype, never will. The kingdom will remain intact in His hands.

But what does the passage itself imply? Does it not teach us that David's seed would be the object of God's solicitude and interest and delight, and that the Father would be the One for whom David's seed would live and labour when in the throne of His supremacy and rest? No angel could fulfil this high behest. To which of the angels said He at any time, "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?" This, then, lets us into the secret of all the activities of His resurrection life and of His position on the throne. The Father's delight is in Him, and He is working for the glory of the Son. The Son's delight is in God, and He is working for His Father's interest and satisfaction. It was the principle upon which He lived in the days of His flesh (*see* John 14: 31); but in our passage in Hebrews it is stated of Him in His Solomon character, with the throne and the kingdom in view.

As regards this moment in which we are found, Christ is unseen by the world. It is the faith period, during which we are introduced to Christ in the heavens. We have been led to discover Him there in resurrection, Centre of the Father's delight and affection, even as He is there for the fulfilment of the good pleasure of God.

The third quotation is introduced: "Again, when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith,

AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM"

This is taken possibly from Deuteronomy 32: 43 (the "Seventy" version of it), and if so, it is associated, not with the Incarnation and Birth of Luke 2, but with the avenging of His servants' blood, the rendering of vengeance to His adversaries, the showing of mercy to Palestine and the Jews.

But more possibly it is taken from Psalm 97: 7, where those beings that are higher than men are spoken of as gods. Both Ps. 96 and Ps. 87 are written as the expression of the earthly people's delight in seeing Jehovah coming in and reigning over the earth. It is the glory that is in view, not the humiliation of Christ. It is the inauguration of His kingdom. The angels are summoned to worship Him.

The fourth quotation is from Psalm 104:

"WHO MAKETH HIS ANGELS SPIRITS, AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE."

This, again, is a psalm of Jehovah's majesty and glory. The circumstances of humiliation through which the Saviour passed in the days of His flesh are not in contemplation, but rather the glad day when His rule will extend over all the earth. Then will the mighty angels do His bidding, and gladly serve His will. As the cherubim stood at Eden's gate to forbid the return of sinful man to paradise, so will His ministers exclude from His kingdom all that offend and do iniquity; the sinners will be consumed out of the earth, and the wicked be no more. How glorious the Master, whose servants are so great!

The fifth quotation is:

"THY THRONE, O GOD, IS FOR EVER AND EVER: A SCEPTRE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE SCEPTRE OF THY KINGDOM. THOU HAST LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED INIQUITY THEREFORE GOD EVEN THY GOD, HATH ANOINTED THEE WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE THY FELLOWS "

This is from Psalm 45, a great millennial psalm. The verses quoted open up to us a world of interest as we ponder their meaning. A divine Person in the throne, companions associated with Him in His reign, His kingdom characterized by righteousness and the suppression of iniquity; and gladness from God filling His heart and the hearts of His companions in a scene that is never to be superseded by any alien power as long as time shall last.

It is remarkable as addressing the future Messiah definitely as God: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." The burden and administration of the kingdom does not diminish or tarnish His glory, any more than did the bearing of our sin or the contact with death in the day of His humiliation.

The sixth is:

"THOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING HAST LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH; AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF THINE HANDS: THEY SHALL PERISH; BUT THOU REMAINEST AND THEY ALL SHALL WAX OLD AS DOTHS A GARMENT; AND AS A VESTURE SHALT THOU FOLD THEM UP, AND THEY SHALL BE CHANGED: BUT THOU ART THE SAME, AND THY YEARS SHALL NOT FAIL."

This is from Psalm 102. It is Jehovah's response to the One who was destitute and weak, and whose days were shortened here. He took up the sorrows of His earthly people, and for their sake bore indignation and wrath at Jehovah's hands. Enemies reproached Him, and He sounded the lowest depths of trouble, weakness, isolation, and grief. He prays: "I said, O My God, take Me not away in the midst of My days;" and then, instead of responding with a mercy which added fifteen years (as in Hezekiah's case) to the threatened life, Jehovah replies with this marvellous statement of the Sufferer's glory.

The earth's foundation was laid by the One who is crying out of all this distress; the heavens that then darkened over Him were the work of His hands. But the material creation, in the form known to us, will perish, while He stands and endures; its days will be numbered, and the signs of decay and age be found in heaven and earth; but He will be the same, and His years shall have no end. It is noticeable how that He speaks in His humiliation of His "*days*" four times over (vers. 3, 11, 23, 24); while in Jehovah's reply to Him He speaks of "*Thy years*." They are throughout all generations, and they shall have no end.

So that the outlook over Christ's glory is enlarged to the end of the millennial kingdom, when the present heavens and earth will be folded up and changed; and as to their present form, at any rate, they shall perish, having served their purpose. All that is material shall undergo its change; but Christ shall undergo none. Never will there be any diminution of His glories, or change in His person. Overwhelmed as we are in the presence of His greatness, charmed as we are by the blessedness of our Object, we have the heart-rest and satisfaction of knowing that our holy Lord, the Son of God will never lose the lustre of His brightness, the fine gold will never become dimmed — He is eternally "the Same."

The seventh, and last, quotation is:

"SIT ON MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE THINE ENEMIES THY FOOTSTOOL."

This, of course, is Psalm 110. There is no need to emphasize the fact that this is a resurrection psalm. Christ, who is David's Son, is David's Lord (Matt. 22: 41-55). Seen here in flesh the Spirit who indited David's Psalm indicates His removal to Jehovah's right hand for a time, to be seated there until the period when His enemies should be subdued. I say *period* for, while it is certain from the psalm that He will strike through kings in the day of His wrath and will judge among the heathen, it is plain from 1 Corinthians 15: 24-26 that it looks on to time when there will not be an enemy left to destroy. His kingdom will endure, and no rule or authority or power will succeed against Him. Even the final breakdown of man when Satan shall be loosed and shall deceive the nations for the last time (Rev. 20: 7-10), bringing them up against the people of God, will result in the utter confusion and final overthrow of revolt in man and devil; and the kingdom will remain intact in the hands of the Lamb. Then will occur the removal of heavens and earth, the judgment of the great white throne, and the casting of the unsaved into their final destination of the lake of fire for eternity. *The last enemy* that shall be destroyed is death. So complete is Christ's triumph, so absolute is Christ's glory, that in no part of the universe will it be possible to say that death has removed one human soul from Christ's sway, either as Saviour for blessing or as Judge for punishment.

This leads us to the bound of what is spoken of in Hebrews as "the world to come."

To sum up briefly, then, no alteration of dispensation, no lapse of time, no changes in the material creation, can effect the least change in our blessed Lord.

1. On the day of His resurrection He was found "the Same," untainted by all He had passed through.

2. In the throne, "the Same" in His affection for the Father, and the Father's for Him; and in the blessedness of that relationship in which He is so wholly devoted to His Father's will.

3. "The Same" on His return to the world for the inauguration of His millennial kingdom.

4. "The Same" in His right and power to control the whole administration of the kingdom, on its heavenly side as well as on its earthly side; angels and authorities and powers being subject unto Him.

5. "The Same" in the excellence of His moral character in the throne, uncorrupted by the splendour of His kingdom, as He was undaunted by the sufferings that led to it.

6. "The Same" when creation grows old and is changed, preserving intact every glory that He had when He laid its foundations and built it in its highest parts.

7. "The Same" when all opposition to God is silenced for eternity, when all taint of sin shall have been removed and all evil shall have been done away; every question of good and evil settled, and God shall be all in all.

We used to sing in the first days of our conversion:

"Oh, what a Saviour is Jesus our Lord,

Well might His Name by His Saints be adored."

We sing the same now; but even yet we wonder and wonder on as we see wider and deeper glories ever unfolding before our hearts. Praise takes on a richer tone as we understand more fully how worthy He is.