



Lesson 1 December 5th, 2020

Called Through Heritage

Study Scripture – Hebrews 1:1-5; Matthew 1:1-6, 16-17

Background Scripture – Hebrews 1

Key Verse:

God who at sundry times and diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Hebrews 1:1-2

INTRODUCTION

Our Study Scripture is directly intended to get us out of the dullness in our Christian life. It has a direct and powerful application to our lives. It tells us who our Saviour is and accordingly who we are. This reminder is most or even critically important for many believers tend to get sluggish and drift away from the truth which led them on the path to eternal life that they have once held.

It is therefore important that we define the word *heir* from the start of this Study which deals with believers being called through Heritage.

An *heir* is a person who has the legal right to an inheritance. One writer summarizes this concept for us as follows:

“Jewish law regulated inheritances, giving two shares to the firstborn son and one share each to the other sons (Deuteronomy 21 :17).

God's first family was the nation of Israel (Romans 9:4-5). God said, “Israel is my son, my firstborn”. (Exodus 4:22)—and “I will be (Israel's) father, and he shall be my son” (2 Samuel 7:14).

Paul says that Christ's disciples have become **“joint heirs with Christ”**. Romans 8:14-17- -the result of God adopting us into his family (John 1:12-13; Romans 8: 15, 23; Galatians 3:16; 4:4-6; Ephesians 1:5; Revelation 21:7).

Now the author of Hebrews tells us that God has appointed his Son “heir of all things” (1:2)“.

The central theme of the book of Hebrews therefore is "The Superiority of Christ. Jesus Christ is superior to everything and everyone! Jesus is exalted, His work is exalted and through Him something amazing and marvelous has happened. It is through Him that we are given life and we become heirs of salvation.

An important aspect of the book of Hebrews actually deals with an issue that many of us would like to avoid. People constantly say that it would be nice if God would speak to them directly, so that they could know clearly what He desired of them.

The implication of this attitude is that God has somehow not communicated clearly and effectively to us and does not relate to us in a manner that would help us to understand Him and accordingly behave in the right manner.

The book of Hebrews however challenges this position directly, for the writer is quite satisfied with how God communicates with us and he insists that God has already said to us all that He really needs to say. We have been called. We have no excuse.

The communication method has been so great and stupendous, that Christians know what they should believe, know how to make other Christians believe and clearly tell Christians how to act like believers.

This book tells us that Scripture is not about us searching around to find God, suffering and killing ourselves in the process. Sinful man really does not want to know God anyway. Rather, it tells us that because of God's heart, He has determined to seek us, for He wants us to know Him.

He has in many ways and using many methods spoken to us from the creation of the world. Finally, to strip us of any excuse about understanding the divine character, He has spoken through His Son, so that we can most clearly see the nature of God and His requirements.

The writer of Hebrews does not begin by describing the message, telling us that God spoke some words. This last message doesn't come in pieces, or in a variety of ways. It comes in one way, one FINAL way.

What he has done through the entire book is to describe Jesus Christ. He shows us the Son, for the Son is the message. So here we have a situation where God's final word to us is His Son. It is not that rules, codes, or Commandments are not important. They are. But the emphasis is on knowing a person, having a personal relationship with a person, for that person relationship is what brings life. The knowing of the person comes first, and then knowing the words, the rules, and the Commandments come together in one piece and all go together.

When we read this Book we are to understand the greatness of God's final word, look at the message and who embodies the message. We will see Israel's three covenant offices described that of prophet, priest, and king.

There is no greater messenger/message and it would be good for us all to immerse ourselves in studying who Jesus is. This is the ultimate experience and it should be a part of the life of all Christians.



As such we are looking at 'One' who is the answer to every human need. This 'One' is available and adequate, incomparable and perfect. He is the only One that offers men free and unrestricted access to God something which if grasped will satisfy the most desperate need of all men.

This inspired letter was certainly authored by the Holy Spirit and for whatever the divine reason, was delivered through a still unidentified writer. Some have attributed the letter to Paul, some to Apollos, some to Peter, some to Barnabas the Levite "son of encouragement" and the list goes on but it remains an anonymous letter.

The language is beautiful and flawless and is structured differently from every other book in the Scriptures. One writer says it begins like an essay, changes into a sermon and then ends like a letter.

It approaches the nature of Jesus from a Greek frame of mind, driving home its message that Jesus is the ultimate reality.

The date of the writing from the internal evidence places it somewhere between A.D. 60- AD 69; after Jesus' ascension around A.D. 30 and before the destruction of Jerusalem AD 70.

Hebrews was written to a group of Jewish Christians at a location somewhere outside of Palestine and compares and contrasts Jesus to all that was iconic, revered, venerated and celebrated in Judaism. It completely rejects Greek and pagan philosophies about God and is firmly and deeply rooted in Old Testament Scriptures.

The arguments are a powerful defense of Scripture, aimed at both Jew and Gentile and is of immense benefit to us.

In making the comparisons, the writer presents the surpassing excellence of the person and work of Jesus Christ, against a backdrop of the Old Covenant and its enduring symbols: angels, Moses, the Levitical Priesthood, sacrifices, inheritance and the Temple.

The Book has eighty-two references to Scripture, with twenty-nine quotations and fifty-three allusions to the Old Testament and never once referring to the non-canonical books of the Apocrypha.

It exhorts Christians to continue to strongly hold to their faith in Jesus, for He is pre-eminent 'One'. The writer tells us clearly who He is and what He has done because of who He is.

The majority of the people whom he addresses directly had genuinely come to faith in Christ but had begun to cast a longing eye to Judaism. This behavior was on account of intense persecution, victimization and ostracism for their faith, within their own community.

Some had begun to doubt the excellence and superiority of Christianity and naturally its central figure Jesus Christ and had begun to take a second look at Judaism.



As one commentator notes: With its ...**imposing rites, community sentiment in its favour; the fact of its history and antiquity and its undisputed Divine origin...** Judaism held an undeniable pull on those Jewish Christians. In addition to their natural prejudices, the persecution sapped their commitment, discouraged them and presented a serious temptation to abandon Christianity. Seemingly some of the believers had relapsed into that difficult and precarious position of slipping deeper and deeper back into Judaism.

The writer exhorts his readers to return and commit themselves to Christ, in the light of who He was and what He represented for them. He issues some stirring warnings against apostasy and back-sliding to which all Christians must take heed.

Some believe sections of the book directly warn unbelievers in the Jewish community. They would be either those who knew the truth and were rejecting it or those who had not yet understood the truth. So whether the writer was directing the epistle to an unbeliever or a believer, he was constantly announcing the superiority of Christ.

Thus Hebrews became a reminder to the Jewish Christians, of the glories of the Saviour. It was an encouragement for them to know that the New Covenant was better than the Old, for this had been the message of the prophets.

These believers should not think that they had to hold onto the Old Covenant, for God had promised that the time would come, that He would make a new Covenant with the house of Israel and the House of Judah. Rather, they should accept the offer of God, seize the opportunity and grow to maturity in Christ in the New Covenant.

Arrested spiritual growth and sanctification (5:12-13) compounded the community's problem and herein is another warning for all Christians. Failure to apply and act on the truth that has been revealed often means the with-holding of further truth from such individuals, (Rom.1: 18-32).

This group unlike Jerusalem or Galilean Jews, had never met Jesus. They had received the gospel message and teachings directly from the Apostles and Prophets. So the recipients of Hebrews were second-generation Christians as a result of apostolic missionaries. Even so they were not new believers and had in fact brought glory to the name of God after they were saved.

We should be aware that these early Christians came from a society that was slightly different from ours.

This ancient world placed a great of emphasis affection on Angels and they worshiped the in their ancient religious rites. When we look on the ancient religious activities and those of the Roman and Greek pantheon of gods, angels are the demigods in this pantheon. Besides this, the children of Israel also thought a great deal about Angels and the angelic work for the Bible did speak of angels in both the Old Testament and the New Testament calling them messengers and agents of God. Some even thought that when the Bible said in Genesis 1 "**Let us make man**



in our own image, after our own likeness” this referred to God discussing creation with the angelic hosts. The early Christians therefore had a great attraction and pull toward these ideas. In addition, they faced persecution from family and friends and from the religious and secular authorities who wanted them to revert to Judaism. As a result of this and the urge to survive in a hostile society they faced a certain dullness and a declining awareness of their Saviour. This dangerous drift from the truth had set in.

In our Study Lesson the author makes some profound statements about the person of Christ and in order to show us the superiority of this Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, he proceeds to a comparison with angels. Let us be mindful that the pagan world regarded angels or spirit beings as powerful entities that should be courted and worshipped, but we should not forget that the worship of angels is still a problem today for they appear on television and movies and are very popular. The popular media encourage the idea that angels are lovely, delicate, and feminine, going against the scriptural teachings that angels are often quite fearsome. They are here to protect the servants of God against the attacks of Satan and the world and they form the armies of heaven. We might think that some of these angels on note cards and the ceramic collection of angels are harmless but they are really a form of idolatry.

For Christians, let us see Jesus as He is portrayed in our Text and respond with faith and loyalty to our Great High Priest.

The intent of Hebrews is not just to inform people of the exalted, pre-eminent, glorious and unique position of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, as vitally important as that maybe. The writer seeks to elicit the proper response of faith, trust, love and loyalty to Jesus in all his readers.

It is important that believers understand that knowledge of Jesus and his work of redemption must manifest itself in a changed life of obedience to the commandments of God.

THE TEXT

Verse 1. The book opens with the fact that God spoke. Note that the author regards God’s existence as a self-evident fact. It makes no attempt to prove God’s existence. He would certainly accept the teaching that the: *“The fool had said in his heart there is no God”*. Wonderful as our senses might be, they can only operate in the natural realm. We were never going to know God beyond what is revealed in creation, that is, natural revelation. We could never know God past a few of his attributes if He did not speak to us.

Understand that we are now reading about the Father speaking about the Son and telling us what we need to know about Him.

We might ask ourselves the question, why would God speak to us? If we consider that we speak because we want to be connected to others, for others to understand us and for others to be able to relate to us, we will begin to answer the question. God has made us in His image



and in this we are like Him. So we know that God “speaks” because He wants to relate to us and connect with His creation.

This tells us something about God and His nature. He cares for His creation and seems to have no intention of letting it drift away completely. So He connects, relates and deals with us.

The Divine origin of Judaism and the authenticity of the Old Testament revelation is affirmed (*God...spoke*), with the observation that the revelation was delivered in many portions (*at sundry times*) to the prophets and in many ways. The 39 books in the Old Testament with their varied lengths, styles and subjects are examples of the many portions. Sometimes God spoke through prophets, priests, kings; directly to a man and told him to write, sometimes He communicated through a vision, sometimes in a parable and sometimes through a type or a symbol, event, prophecy or institution. These are the different ways in which God spoke in the Old Testament. Some of the Old Testament is history, some is poetry, some is law and some is prophecy. God speaks through them all.

He used many methods, different approaches, different kinds of revelations, different people with different personalities and approaches. So it is no surprise that there are exhortations, warnings, encouragements, pleadings, rough talk, beautiful poetry, stories, parables, histories, genealogies and an amazing variety of communication devices.

The Old Testament revelation was fragmented and in bits coming first as a little ‘light’, then more light at irregular intervals, so it was progressive.

One should not get from this however, that somehow the people who lived after Adam knew more about God than Adam and Eve and that people like Enoch, Melchizedek, or Noah somehow were very ignorant about God compared to us. We should understand that men did not always retain knowledge of God consistently and much of what had been revealed before had to be taught again.

God spoke to their ancestors (*the fathers*). The word *prophet*, as used in the Scriptures, means not only those who predict future events but those who communicate the Divine will (Rom.12:6; 1Cor.14:1) on any subject. It is used here in that wider sense, denoting all those by whom God had communicated to the Jews in former times.

The Old Testament Scriptures are very extensive and complete. Jesus used these Scriptures to remind the ignorant and *slow of heart* disciples, that much of what He said had already been revealed by the Spirit. The nature of man through the ages however made it necessary for God to reveal Himself directly.

Verse 2. ...*last days* is interpreted as the last period of the world by some, with no reference to its duration. It could also be referring to the last days of revelation or final revelation. The writer could also be making a Messianic reference. The phrase "the last days" was very familiar to the Jews and since he was writing to Jews, he might well be saying Jesus was the Messiah and spoke the final revelation of God. After all, the prophet Micah did give the promise that in the last days, the Messiah would establish His Kingdom (Micah 4:1-2).



The Jewish nation saw the last days as the time when Messiah, the Kingdom, and salvation would come and Israel would no longer be under bondage.

They as well as the Samaritans also accepted that when Messiah came the level of knowledge available to all would be tremendously affected. There would in fact be a new world in almost every respect.

In John 4:25 the woman at the well in Sychar said to Jesus, "*I know that Messiah cometh, who is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things.*" She knew that Messiah would unfold the full and final revelation of God.

For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen...

2 Cor.1:20.

Every promise resolves itself in Christ, thus He is the final revelation. So in contrast to the many ways and many parts in which God spoke previously, the revelation through His Son is full and complete; simply because God contains all truth and is the truth. No wonder one writer notes: **"If men cannot learn about God from the Son, no amount of prophetic voices or actions would convince them"**

*...by His Son...*a title given to Jesus to designate His peculiar relation to God and understood by the Jews to mean equality with God,

(John 5:18). (See also John 1:14, Luke 10:22; 2 Peter 1:17).

There is a definite unity and continuity in the revelation from the prophets to the Son, all issuing from the same source and for the same purpose.

The continuity in leadership and in prophetic revelation is certainly stressed, but the emphasis continues to be, that though there were great human leaders in the past with connections to God like Abraham, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Samuel, David, and great prophets like Elijah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, Jesus alone occupies the place of ultimate authority in the universe.

There is a qualitative and distinct difference between that spoken by messengers and that spoken by the Son of God, by virtue of His office and who He is. The revelation of or given by the Son of God must of necessity be superior to that given by prophets and therefore worthy of the more diligent consideration of the Hebrews.

Others might have spoken well, though in ways that men did not always wish to hear, but the Son has greater authority and being God can speak with more clarity and completeness than any human leader or prophet.

Note that the apostles who are the spokesmen for Christ did not add new teachings or insights, and were very careful when they were elaborating on the subject matter on which they spoke, to be faithful to the teachings of Jesus.

Jesus himself referred to their privileged position in blessing them in Matthew 13:16-17_



“Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”

heir of all things... derives from the fact that He is firstly the Son of God and secondly is also the Creator of all things, hence His undoubted superior greatness.

It is the usual case that a son is naturally an heir. Still it is not to be understood as if he inherits anything as a man does, after the death of its possessor, usually his father. The meaning here is that, as the Son of God, He is possessor or Lord of all things, or that all things are His.

This is how the word is commonly used in the New Testament; It refers to a *possessor* of anything received as a portion, or of property of any kind. (See Romans 4:13,14. p. Acts 2:36; 10:36; John 17:10; 16:15.) The emphasis is on His station.

...Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession... (Psalm 2:6-8).

The psalmist indicated that God would have a Son who would become the heir of all that He possesses. That Son is Jesus Christ.

I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

Psalm 89:27.

The word *firstborn* does not mean that Jesus Christ didn't exist at one time. The issue is that the firstborn has the right to the inheritance. In this case it's not a chronological term; it's a term of legal right. Christ is God's heir.

By whom... Jesus is the agent through whom God created the world. *All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.* (John 1:3)

The object is to fix in the mind of the readers the worth and dignity of the One who is the creator of all things, not just the earth but the entire universe, (*worlds*). Jesus Christ is responsible for creating not only the physical earth, but also time, space, force, action and matter.

This creative power of Jesus is responsible for the things we see, the tiny things we cannot see and the distant things that we cannot even see.

It is important to note that by creating, Jesus began time itself and He is thus at the beginning and is at the end, in the future. So clearly, we understand that our present situation is located in “time”, which has a beginning and an end. It is not permanent, and we are not trapped in an endless cycle of existence.

What a comfort! He is there to beckon us to come into eternity with Him.



Verse 3. Here the writer presents Jesus as God and introduces His office of High Priest, with Jesus having terminally purged our sins and *sat down*.

He states that Jesus is the visible manifestation of God and is equally glorious in nature and perfections as Jehovah, for He is God Himself. The image is of the sun or a luminous body with and its rays or beams. The rays make the sun visible and is of the same substance.

Yet one is not before the other, and though distinct from each other, they cannot be divided or separated one from the other.

The Father and the Son are similarly of the same nature and substance yet distinct from each other. Jesus Christ is the essence of God manifested to men. He is portrayed as the *brightness of His glory*, meaning He actually makes God visible to men figuratively and literally as a brightness emanating from a source.

That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. (1Tim.6:14-16).

The word *image* expresses both the idea of “likeness”, as stamped on a coin or as seen in a mirror and “manifestation”, which means that the image has become perfect, so that it would be called a manifestation, showing what God is. The term ‘*express image*’ in Greek usage indicates a die or a stamp, or the mark made by a seal. The sense is that Jesus Christ is the exact reproduction of God. When a die is stamped, it gives an exact imprint. Jesus Christ is the reproduction of God in human form.

Jesus was not only the manifestation of God but also God in substance. The *express image of his person...* The word for ‘person’ in the phrase means ‘substance’ or ‘essence’. It refers to the essential nature of God or that which distinguishes him from all other beings. God is fully revealed in Jesus, yet Jesus is distinct in His own person.

When someone asks the deep question if God exists, or asks if He exists what He like is, we can answer that yes, God exists because Jesus exists. God is like Jesus. If a person wants to understand something about His exalted state, one only has to look at the Mount of Transfiguration experience, or at what He looked like in the Book of Revelation chapter 1. Other descriptions are found in some of the prophetic books.

So Jesus shows us God and what He is like as a man, so that we would have the correct beliefs about Him.

Just consider brethren what we know about God as seen in Jesus. His voice stilled the storm. He healed all diseases from the sick. He quieted those that opposed Him very simply. He healed the mind of many. He raised people from the dead. He spoke and all kinds of marvelous things were just done. So we really see what God is like, what His heart is like and what the feelings and emotions of love in His heart mean for man.



Jesus even wept when He saw the stubbornness of man and saw the destruction toward which they were headed. We learn by looking at Jesus that God is not willing that any should perish. Because of that heart of mercy and love, we can be confident that He will do everything necessary to save those that come to Him. The very coming of His Son, His life of patience and hard continuing work on behalf of man shows what God the Father is like

Any belief that strays from this scriptural description of Jesus is describing “another Jesus”. Following that false Jesus is totally condemned by Scripture.

*...upholding...*the continuous action of supporting or maintaining. The entire universe continues at His behest. The earth and the universe, all continue and remain at His command. His word and its effects speak to His awesome power and testify to His divinity as the Son of God, (Psalms 33:9; Matthew 28:18).

Changes in the solar system or to the physical laws would spell catastrophic consequences for life on earth. Our lives and continued existence depend on the constancy of physical laws and they remain in effect through the power of His word. One writer notes in part:

Even if He simply stopped holding the law of gravity where it is, we would all die. If the laws of science varied, we couldn't exist. The food you eat could turn to poison. You wouldn't be able to stay on the earth--you'd fall off, if you weren't drowned by the ocean first! Consider what would happen if things changed. The sun has a surface temperature of twelve thousand degrees Fahrenheit. If it were any closer to earth, we would burn; and if it were any further, we'd freeze. Our globe is tilted on an exact angle of 23 degrees, which enables us to have four seasons. If it weren't tilted, vapors from the ocean would move north and south, eventually piling up monstrous continents of ice. If the moon did not remain a specific distance from the earth, the ocean tide would completely inundate the land twice a day. If the ocean floor merely slipped a few feet deeper, the carbon dioxide and oxygen balance in the earth's atmosphere would be completely upset, and no vegetable or animal life could exist on earth. If our atmosphere suddenly thinned out, many of the meteors that now harmlessly burn up when they hit our atmosphere would constantly bombard us.

*...purged our sins sat down...*The purification, the cleansing from sin is the ultimate purpose for which Jesus came. His action was in sharp contrast to that of the Levitical priests who offered sacrifices daily, year in and year out and who could never really ‘sit down’, signalling an end to the need for ‘cleansing’. Christ on the other hand ‘sat down’ having accomplished the purpose for which He had come, (1 John 1:7; Hebrews 7:27; 9:12-14).

Never forget that the purification of our sins involved all kinds of agony and the shedding of blood. No mere man, prophet or modern scientist could accomplish this feat. This was not just a display of power on the part of Christ, but instead was a demonstration of sheer love, that He was willing to bear all things for His brethren.



So the final word demand is that the Son gives Himself once and for all. Creation rests upon His call and redemption rests upon His sacrifice. So now after having done all that, after saying “It is finished”, He rose triumphant and sat down in the place of supreme honor and power. We can never forget the central place of the Cross of Christ. When we meet often for the Lord’s Supper, we must concentrate only on that precious event, not on ourselves, for we must do nothing to lessen the extreme value of the act of redemption.

The ‘right hand’ of God is the place of privilege and power; it is the executive seat in Heaven.

He effected the purification from sin by the ‘shedding’ of His own blood, instead of the blood which was shed in the temple-service. The blood of animals could never purify from sin, but those sacrifices pointed to the ultimate sacrifice to be made by ‘The Lamb of God’, Jesus Christ. Note that because Jesus is now seated at the ‘right hand’ of God it means that He has overcome all opposition and has met all needs, leaving no doubt about where everything is headed. All things are under control.

Verse 4-5. Now that Jesus is seated in the place of ultimate power, the Book of Hebrews can easily contrast Jesus with every other being. There can be no doubt about who is the greatest.

The author presents a fresh look at the unparalleled greatness of Jesus and builds his argument around an extensive contrast of Jesus to angels, Jesus to Moses and Jesus to Aaron the High Priest.

Here he begins with angels and following Jesus exaltation from verse 3, his proposition is that Jesus has attained a higher rank (*better*) than any angel, *being seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high*.

One writer explains:

Jesus Christ has always existed, but He became better than the angels in His exaltation, inferring at one time that He had been lower than the angels (Heb. 2:9). Specifically, in Hebrews 1:4 the writer is referring to Christ as God's Son. Christ as a man became lower than angels. But as a result of His faithful obedience and the wonderful work He accomplished as a Son, He was exalted above the angels, which is where He had been before. But this time He was exalted as the Son. Christ did not become the Son of God until His incarnation. He was not the Son of God in eternity past; He was God as the second person of the Trinity. It was as the Son that He was exalted above angels, and that's why He became better than angels. For a while He was lower than the angels, faithfully accomplishing God's work; He became better than the angels as the exalted Son. (See Acts 13:33; Romans 1:3-4).

Bar none! Jesus outranks any and all angels and *all things are placed beneath his feet*.

Christ superiority is shown in five areas: His title, His worship, His nature, His eternity, and His destiny.

It is helpful if we understand that the Jews of the time held angels in very high regard, maybe overly so and the writer had to present the true biblical view of angels, as well as overcome the



inflated view held by many. The Jews knew that the Old Testament was delivered to them from God by angels and that belief accounts for the exalted status of angels in the minds of the children of Israel (Col. 2:18).

What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator.

Galatians 3:19

Angels were regarded as the mediators of the 'old covenant' and as such, the author makes a comparison to show that Jesus is a superior mediator of a better covenant.

This is not just addressed to Jews, but also to Gentiles, for everyone in the ancient world worshipped angels. They were demigods in the long list of divinity in the Roman and Greek pantheon. They were prominent and everyone understood that they were superior to men and accordingly pagans worshiped angels.

The comparison begins with Jesus' title and its implications. The angels are messengers (*ministering spirits vs.9*), but Christ was the Son, a member of the family compared to a servant. Angels, though in an exalted relationship to God, are simply servants.

Let us remember specifically that angels are messengers and that Jesus also came as a messenger. His message however was far greater than the message of the angels. As a *Son*, a position which is inherently much better than that of the angels, He carried out and brought God's final, great message; thereby showing us that He was a much better messenger than both the prophets and the angels. After all, He was the One who was the atoning sacrifice for sins and after doing that returned to the right hand of God as the God- Man. Jesus was simply superior, and by His actions had a right to a more excellent name than any messenger or angel.

Jesus had conquered death. He had become human, shared in the nature of His brethren, been stretched to the point where drops of blood came from His forehead, but He had stood in the place of man as our substitute and won.

So Jesus obtained a more *excellent name*, or title, than angels. It is true that angels as a group and even Christians are in places in Scripture called the *sons of God*, but none has ever been so addressed: *Thou art my Son...*

The author is careful to quote the Old Testament to prove to his readers from familiar texts. (See Psalm 2:7; 2 Samuel 7:14).

Son is clearly a more honourable and loftier name than has ever been addressed to any angel. Naturally the name *Son* carries great entitlements, privileges and honor.



MATTHEW 1:1-6, 16-17.

In this section of our Study Scripture the Apostle Matthew is writing to make it clear that the child that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah that is spoken of in the Old Testament. He is the Son of God that the Book of Hebrews speaks about.

The genealogies covering verses 1 to 17 might seem rather boring to you but it was extremely important and meant a great deal to Jewish people. We nowadays think that our family tree is very significant for it gives meaning to who we are. If you were for example a priest or from a priestly line you would know that before you could become a priest you had to produce as one writer notes” **an unbroken record in your pedigree that showed you were enabled to have this particular office. And furthermore, if you were to marry as a priest, it would be necessary for your wife to produce an unbroken record in her pedigree that stretched back for at least five generations. So it was very important for Jews that one have a pure genealogy”.**

So in clause after clause we read the monotonous “*begat*”. And then finally we read “*Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom (feminine) was born Jesus*”.

We are told that the generations from Abraham to David were 14 generations, and from David to the carrying away to Babylon there were 14 generations, and from the carrying away to Babylon to the Christ were 14 generations. So a genealogy with 58 links in the chain might confuse everybody but Matthew arranged the genealogy in such a way that there are three 14's with each of the sections having 14 and that would be a great aid to memory to help people to remember and connect the births and family line in the genealogy. The family link to Jesus Christ from Abraham would be clear.

But we should remember that when we study Old Testament genealogies carefully in the Old Testament there were more than 14 generations in some of these sections but the reason that Matthew constructed these genealogies in this way was to make it easy to remember and to memorize it.

We must never forget that the people that Matthew wrote to did not have books like what we have today and so much of their learning was done by memorizing just as is the practice in many other ancient societies. To make it easier for them to memorize and learn what was important Matthew had to construct the generations chosen and draw out some of the links in the chain. He simply chose 14 of the links in the generations.

The genealogy is constructed to show that the Lord Jesus is not an isolated figure but that He is connected to what had gone before. He is the product of a long line of generations of important men in these structures such as Abraham and his seed.

Remember that the promised seed of Abraham is critical in salvation history.

Matthew writes to show that Jesus was royalty and so Matthew's Gospel is called the Gospel of THE KING.

The genealogy Matthew gives shows and proves Jesus descended not only from Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel, but also from the royal line of David. Jesus was both completely a



Jew and not only that, but a Jew from the Royal line. He would be born in Bethlehem, the town of Boaz and Ruth. It is to be noted that the last Old Testament messianic use of this form ula of the genealogy is in Ruth 4:18 where the genealogy ends with David. Matthew outlines the genealogy of David used there and extends it all the way down to Jesus Christ.

Verse 1. The background to this verse can be called to our memory for Abraham had a Covenant around a Land and an eternal royal dynasty recorded in Genesis 12, 17, and chapter 35. Then as God unfolded salvation history. David was promised a seed, a throne, and a kingdom or realm.. grounded in **the Davidic Covenant** which we find in Psalm 89, 2 Samuel 7:12-17, Psalm 2:7 and 1 Corinthians 17

This Matthew genealogy of Jesus Christ has several features. Remember first that Jesus is the **personal** name and it comes from the Old Testament word meaning **“to be”**. And so is related to the name of the covenant keeping God of the Old Testament which some call Yahweh, others Jehovah. Jesus is the Hebrew form of Yehoshua, and the Greek form of Joshua which means **“O Lord, save”**, or **“Jehovah is salvation”** or **“Jehovah saves”**.

Notice now that the name “Christ” is the official name that marks out the person Jesus as **“the Anointed One”**. Scholars therefore point out that **“In the Old Testament prophets were anointed, priests were anointed, Kings were anointed. This is the anointed great Prophet, the anointed royal priest and the anointed King. And so history and prophecy unite in this prophet, priest, or the King, our Lord Jesus Christ”**.

The person Jesus is now called the Son of David because Matthew is emphasizing the great theme of the Davidic covenant. The Lord Jesus is the son of David, He is the promised seed, and it is He who would sit on the throne and rule in the kingdom. He is Jesus the Messiah.

He is called the Son of Abraham. Because he has received the unconditional fundamental historical covenant of the Old Testament which promised Abraham his seed, a land, and a name and further promised that in his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. It is through this gracious covenant from God the Father that Jesus came to fulfill God's covenant and do certain things.

Matthew therefore has a genealogy that has content showing Jesus descended from Abraham through Judah via Solomon and he brings us to Jesus as the legal heir to the throne of David. Matthew reminds us that God the Father promised to send a King to rule over Israel and that through His rule, universal blessings will come to the entire world. One writer notes:

“Just as the title “Son of Abraham” characterized Jesus as the One in whom the Gentiles will find blessing, so the title “Son of David” characterized Jesus as the One” in whom Israel will find blessing”.

For Matthew, Jesus of Nazareth is the one that would bring God's program to fulfillment. First of all He is the King, and then He is the Saviour. The proof then follows that Jesus is King and Saviour.



Verse 2. Jesus' heritage is Jewish and so Matthew begins with Abraham the father of the Jewish race. He uses the word Abraham to show that he is focusing on the covenant privileges God made to Abraham..

Then after he mentions the patriarchs, he begins to separate Judah and his brothers, as the promise was made to Judah that Messiah would come from him, and that out of this tribe would come the ruler.

Verses 3 to 6. Pharez is a key figure in the Old Testament genealogy as found in Ruth 4:12 and in 1 Chronicles 4:1, as well as in Jewish tradition. His twin brother is also mentioned. It is noted that in Jewish tradition the phrase "son of Perez" is a rabbinic expression for the Messiah and that tradition places the Royal line to Perez.

Matthew here introduces Tamar, a woman, and then continues this unusual practice of naming women in genealogies, in verse 5 with Rahab and Ruth, and in verse 6 with Bathsheba.

It is unusual because before the Middle Ages, Jews trace their heritage through their male ancestors. Matthew is giving us a message about how God looks at people. One writer comments on what this means: **"Of the four women mentioned two- Rahab and Ruth-are foreigners, and three -- Tamar, Rahab and Bathsheba were stained with sin"**.

Another writer adds:

Of these four, TWO (Tamar and Rahab) were Canaanites, one (Ruth) a Moabite, and one (Bathsheba) presumably a Hittite.

Surely, they exemplify the principle of the sovereign grace of God, who not only is able to use the foreign (and perhaps even the disreputable) to accomplish his eternal purposes, but even seems to delight in doing so".

Others point out that Matthew included these woman to show that Jesus came into the world to place sinners into the family of God. He came to seek and to save the lost. Jesus' ministry was a universal ministry and it called out to all people. Those that came to Him would be included in His kingdom.

It is also felt that the inclusion of these women in the genealogy would prepare the readers for the most important role that Mary would play in the messianic line. In every case, there was unexpected, divine providence, which placed the woman in the messianic line.

It is also to be noted that the Old Testament stories relating to most of these woman show that in every case these Gentiles had extraordinary faith. They were contrasted to Jews who lacked their level of faith. One writer summarizes what he considers to be the theological purposes of Matthew in structuring his genealogy. He writes

"First, they demonstrate God's providential hand in preserving Messiah, even in apostate times. This naturally led to Matthew's account of the Virgin conception, through which God brought the Messiah into the world.

Second, they demonstrate God's heart for Godly Gentiles and the significant role of their faith at crucial times in Israel's history.



Third, they demonstrate the importance of the Abrahamic and the Davidic covenants to understanding Messiah's mission, with a focus on faith and obedience, not a racial line. Fourth, they call Matthew's readers to repentance and humility, and to accepting Gentiles into the body of Christ, thereby affirming an important theme of Matthew's Gospel".

It should be noted before we look at the last two verses that verse 11 tells us that the nation of Israel had reached incredible depths of degradation. In verse 11 we are told **"and Josiah begat Jechoniah and his brethren at the time of the carrying away to Babylon"**.

Jechoniah had come under the curse because of his abominable behavior and it is he of whom the prophetic statement was made **"No one of his seed should ever sit upon the throne of David in Israel"**.

But note this that with this curse the Messiah could never come from that kingly line. If it were not for the Virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ it would be impossible for Jesus Himself to sit up on the throne of David for he was a descendent of the line upon which the curse was placed. But because of the Virgin birth Jesus would be born of Mary, a woman who was also descended from David but not from the Kingly line of the cursed Jechoniah.

Verses 16-17. So verse 16 makes it plain that Jesus was born of Mary, (the pronoun is feminine) but note carefully that He is born of Mary who had a husband named Joseph. It is stated that Jesus was born of Mary and that Jesus is called Christ. Jesus therefore did not have a physical father named Joseph. If Joseph was his physical father Jesus could never sit on the throne of David. But Joseph had the legal right to name his adopted son Jesus born of Mary, and give Him the right to sit on the throne of David.

Note therefore the amazing precision in the word of God.

Note therefore that Matthew would summarize that his genealogies traced the perfect line of Jesus showing that He had the right to sit on the throne of David. and fulfil all the requirements of the covenant made with Abram and David.

CONCLUSION

The dazzling beauty and superiority of our Creator Jesus has been displayed.

So we note God's word to us and it is simply a simple one-word answer to everything we want or need: "Jesus"!

He is the final word.

Remember that we must not only know something about Jesus, but we must seek to constantly learn more and more about Him. After all, He is infinite and we should never stop learning about Him. Not only must we learn about Christ but the truths learned must govern our walk day- by- day.

So we must ask ourselves these questions. Do we really believe He is the Creator of all things, infinitely higher than any other being, the one who is in complete control of human events? Or do we trust in someone else or in "other things" to provide the answers for life.



Do we find ourselves always turning to Jesus the great High Priest, to provide strength to resist temptations, to develop self-control, to be given wisdom, to be strengthened to face the mounting pressures of life?

We believe that throughout all the hardships and disappointments of life the loving hand of our Saviour
or is there with us, to ensure that we use every opportunity to show His nature and character to those around us?

Given what we have been told about Christ do we think it a great and high privilege to daily take up our cross, bear the reproach of the world from the immoral and lost people of the world and bring glory to His name?

Let the thought of ever turning our backs on Jesus never enter our minds but rather let us commit our lives to Him in faithful obedience.
Our heritage is in Christ. Remember that.

Whatever the attraction might be, Christians would do well to note that the book of Hebrews presents everything in Christ as being better: a better hope, a better testament, a better promise, a better sacrifice, a better substance, a better country and a better resurrection.

The writer could confidently say to his readers: *But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.*

Let us as Christians so live that all can confidently speak of us in like manner, for in demonstrating these things, we will be showing the things that accompany salvation.

