

The Superiority of the New Position (Continued)

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the superiority of Jesus Christ to all else, highlighting His fullness, finality, and supremacy over all else.

Scripture: Matthew 1:21, Matthew 28:18, 2 Corinthians 5:19, Ephesians 1:10, Colossians 1:19, Hebrews 1:1-3, Hebrews 2:9, Hebrews 3:1-6, Hebrews 4:15, Hebrews 10:31

Topics: "New Covenant", "Superiority of Christ"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the superiority of the new dispensation through Jesus Christ as presented in the Letter to the Hebrews. He explains that in this new era, God speaks directly through His Son, who embodies the fullness of divine revelation and acts as the ultimate High Priest, surpassing figures like Moses and Aaron. The sermon highlights that Jesus, as the heir of all things and the one who upholds the universe, offers a relationship with God that is both personal and powerful. Sparks warns that failing to heed the voice of the Son means missing the finality of God's message, as there will be no other means of communication. Ultimately, he encourages believers to recognize the unparalleled greatness of Jesus and the abundant resources available in this new covenant.

Transcript

In our last message we only made a beginning with this matter - and when we say 'we made a beginning' as we come almost to the end of the Conference, it is quite evident that we are going to have twelve basketfuls over when we have finished! We really have not sounded the full depth of this Letter to the Hebrews, and there is so much more that could extend us for a long time. Perhaps that is how it ought to be. We do not want to come to an end. We want to feel that the land is a land of far distances, and that the Lord can lead us into it, even without a Conference.

Well, we are now going on a little way further into that land - the land of the superiority of this dispensation over all past dispensations.

We are now at the supreme matter in the Letter, and, therefore, the supreme matter in the dispensation: that is, how much higher and fuller is that which has come in with the Lord Jesus than ever came in in old time.

You will see, right at the beginning of the Letter, that this is the dispensation of God's Son, and the dispensation of Him in a new personal manifestation. We believe that He was present in the old dispensation and appeared to men in other forms, but this Letter says that He has come in a new form. So it begins with the manifested presence of God's Son. The first verse says that in the old dispensation men met God in "divers portions and in divers manners", and God met men and men met God in the prophets. Now the prophets were the servants of God, and men met God through His servants. In this dispensation they meet Him in His Son personally. There is a statement that "God was in Christ" (II Corinthians 5:19), so the 'Son' implies the 'Father', and the 'Son of God' implies God. So we meet God in the Son and not now in servants.

This reaches absolute fullness in the matter of divine revelation. "For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him (the Son) should all fullness dwell" (Colossians 1:19). There is nothing more to be added.

Do not take these as just words. Do understand that in every fragment there is this truth: In the dispensation in which you and I are now living God has come to us in all His fullness. There is no more to be added. In His Son we have the absolute fullness of God, and it is out of that fullness that He speaks to us in His Son. God has only one Son in that sense - His only-begotten Son, which means that there is no one to come after Him. Therefore, God's last word is in His Son. The Son brings both the fullness and the finality of God. It is that which gives the solemnity to this whole Letter. It says: 'If you fail to hear the voice of the Son there will never be another voice for you. God is never going to speak by another voice. God hath spoken in His Son, and He is never going to speak by any other means.' Hence this Letter contains this word of warning and of exhortation: 'Because this is the fullness and this is the end, be sure that you give heed.'

But it is not only God speaking in His Son. That is a way of speaking, but God's speaking is always His acting. In this dispensation God is active in and through His Son. To come into touch with the Lord Jesus is more than coming into touch with a teaching: it is coming into touch with a living, active Person. 'It is God with whom we have to do.' It is a glorious thing to come into touch with God in Christ - but it says here that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). No, it is not a book, a teaching, a philosophy: it is a living, positive, powerful Person. It is no other than God in action.

If you have any doubt about that, just remember the Book of the Acts. It is called the Acts of the Apostles, but everyone knows that name is wrong, for only three or four Apostles are in view after the first chapter. The others are spoken of at the beginning and then you hear no more about them. It is not the book of the Acts of the Apostles, but the book of the Acts of God in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit - and it is indeed a book of acts! Whatever teaching there is comes out of the acts.

So, in Hebrews, the Son is introduced, presented, and then described. And it is a wonderful description! But we ask: 'Who is this Son?', for His name is not mentioned until we come to chapter two, verse nine. Until then it is the God without a name. Who is this Son? Well, it tells us for the first time in that verse: "We behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus". Perhaps it seems a very simple thing to say that Jesus is this Son, and this Son is Jesus, but possibly you do not recognize a certain thing about this: it is very rarely, after His resurrection and ascension, that He is called Jesus. After He has gone back to heaven He is usually 'the Lord Jesus', 'Jesus Christ our Lord', or 'our Lord Jesus Christ'. He is given His full title when He is enthroned in heaven, so if someone comes right back from that and just uses the title 'Jesus', you know that His humiliation and the purpose of that humiliation are being

referred to. It has to do with His work on earth for our redemption.

So look at this verse again: "We behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death". Jesus was the name of the one who suffered death, tasted death for every man - and it was the Son of God who did that. He it was who as Jesus tasted death for every man, and that is the Son who is introduced here. He is identified by His name - Jesus... "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for it is he that shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Then the next thing is the position and function of the Son. In the second verse of the first chapter of this Letter you have this: "(God) hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds". This Son, known to us as Jesus, is by God's appointment the heir of all things. All things are to come to Him by right of God's appointment.

Please do not be weary with me. This is one of the first things said about the dispensation in which you and I live. It does not look very much like it now, for "we see not yet all things subjected to him" (Hebrews 2:8), but it says here emphatically that He is the "heir of all things", so everything has to come to Him in the end. God is going "to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth" (Ephesians 1:10).

If we were speaking in human language we would put it like this: there was somewhere in the past eternity an occasion when the Godhead had a conference, to discuss the future of everything that was going to be made. There the Father said: 'I make My Son the heir of all things. I appoint Him My heir, and I decree that all things shall in the end come into His possession.'

Now we are dealing with the all-mighty and eternal God, and when He decides a thing like that nothing can prevent it. "Whom he appointed heir of all things" - but He did not leave it there. He turned to the Son (of course, this is only our way of speaking) and said: 'Now I am going to use You as the agent in making all things' - "through whom also he made the worlds". This Son, whom we know as our Saviour and Lord, was God's agent in the creation of the worlds.

Then it says a third thing, and this is something so difficult to understand: This Son upholds "all things by the word of his power" (Hebrews 1:3). Things do not collapse because He is "upholding all things by the word of his power". And things will not collapse until He says they should do so.

If that is true then it is something very wonderful for us. We are hearing so much about the disintegration of the universe and the blowing to pieces of this world. A lot of people are getting very frightened about this. If what is here is true, the universe and the world can never go to pieces until Jesus says so! Men may get very near to doing it, and then it recedes. It just does not happen. It has been like that several times, but the word of His power has stopped it, and until He says 'Now - go!' it will not go. He upholds "all things by the word of his power".

May we go as far as to say that this should be of personal comfort to us? Sometimes it seems that our own little world is going to pieces, and that we have come to the end. Well, it applies there. He will hold things together until He wants them to go to pieces.

This is the Son identified and described.

And then we move on into the larger body of the Letter: the Son's greatness by comparison with other great things and people. In verse four of the first chapter it says: "Having become by so much better than

the angels". The angels are the next highest to God and the Son. Oh, there is so much said about angels in the Bible! Peter says that they are great in might and power (II Peter 2:11). In the book of the Judges an angel is said to have had a very striking appearance, and the person who saw him was afraid she was going to die. She said: "A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of the angel of God, very terrible" (Judges 13:6).

The angels have a very vast knowledge. Jesus said: "Of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven" (Matthew 24:36). If anyone ought to know, the angels should, for their knowledge is so full and so great, but even the angels do not know this. The angels have a vast knowledge.

There is an overwhelming number of angels: "The number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" (Revelation 5:11). They are a vast number.

The angels are very near to the throne of God, and have access to His Presence. That comes out in one of the most beautiful things that Jesus said about little children - "See that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10). Of course, we do not understand that, for it is something very mysterious. But Jesus says that the angels have access to the throne of God, and are very near to God Himself. There is only One who is nearer.

The work of the angels is very varied. Look again at this Letter to the Hebrews, because we are keeping very close to it: "But of which of the angels hath he said at any time, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?" (Hebrews 1:13,14). And what a lot of work they have to do! Think of all the heirs of salvation, all over the world, in every generation - and this says that the angels have to look after them and their interests! "To do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation." Of course, we do not see them, but if the Bible is true the angels are there and are very busy people. They have very much and very valued service. All the various needs of these heirs of salvation are their concern.

So the angels are a very high order - but in this Letter the Lord is saying: 'The Son is far greater than the angels.' It says here, in verse four of the first chapter: "Having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they."

If you read all there is about angels in the Bible you will have a very wonderful revelation - and then you come to this fragment about the Son, who is Jesus, "having become by so much better than the angels". That is where the superiority begins.

We have come into the dispensation of that: the superiority of Jesus to all the angels. Perhaps we have not made enough of the ministry of the angels, but they are evidently very busy for us. Possibly we have been saved from many things because they were very watchful.

We begin with the angels - and then we go on with Moses. You will notice what it says in chapter three: "Wherefore, holy brethren, companions of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus: who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also was Moses in all his house. For he hath been counted worthy of more glory than Moses" - (Get hold of that phrase - more honour than Moses!) - "For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all God's house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were afterward to be

spoken; but Christ as a son over God's house" (Hebrews 3:1-6 - R.V. margin). The writer is saying: 'We are not going to take anything away from Moses. We give him honour as a great servant of God, but Christ is greater. The Son is greater than Moses.'

Abraham was the father of the nation, but Moses was its builder and constitutor. What a large place Moses had in history! He not only had a very large place in Israel, but he has had a large place in the world. Many of the best legal systems are based upon his economy. Because through Moses it was said "Thou shalt not steal" we have all the police forces in the world, and also because he said "Thou shalt not kill". It would be good if we had a few more forces in relation to some other things that Moses said! But the point is: Moses has come to have a very large place in history. The Jews in Christ's day always appealed to Moses as the final authority in anything. Their charge against Jesus was that He made Himself greater than Moses. They believed, therefore, that there was no one greater than Moses: and the writer of this Letter to the Hebrews says, with great boldness, 'There is One greater than Moses. Give Moses all the honour due to him, but the Son is greater than he.'

Then the writer goes on to speak of Aaron, who was the first high priest and thus the representative of the whole priestly system. He was over all the other priests and Levites, over all the sacrifices and over the whole sanctuary. On the Day of Atonement he went alone into the place of the Most Holy. No one but Aaron was allowed then to go into the Holy of holies - and the writer here is saying that the Son is greater than Aaron, far greater. And he tells us why: Aaron died. And anyone who dies can never make anything perfect. When he dies he has to leave something unfinished. So the writer is saying: 'Aaron died. Therefore his work was not perfect. Death cut across it. It was never finished. There had to be a succession of high priests to carry on the work.' There were many more priests and many more sacrifices - all being added to try and make this thing perfect, and chapter nine of this Letter says that they never did make anything perfect. There were many high priests, millions of sacrifices and rivers of blood, yet never bringing anything to perfection.

And then the Son came - one High Priest for ever, who "ever liveth" (Hebrews 7:2,5). Therefore His work will never be cut short. "Thou art a priest forever" (Hebrews 7:17) - and there, in that wonderful paragraph, Melchizedek comes in, and everyone is wondering who he was. Who was Melchizedek? You can go to the Bible and you will never find the answer, and you certainly will not find it outside the Bible. This mysterious man came in, as it were, from nowhere, and where he went to no one knows. He has not beginning nor end, so far as the record is concerned, and that is taken up as illustrating the Lord Jesus as the High Priest - neither beginning of life nor end of days. He is the eternal High Priest. This High Priest, this greater than Aaron, "ever liveth (lives forever) to make intercession".

Then He offered one sacrifice forever. The high priests had used millions of sacrifices but had never made anything perfect. He, with only one sacrifice, did it. It is done forever, and He was the sacrifice as well as the priest. As priest He offered Himself without blemish unto God.

If we go on like this you will really begin to believe that there is something better here - better than Moses and better than Aaron. Do you know why God put these two men together? They were brothers, but they were very different. Yet they had to live together and work together? Why was that, and what was the difference? Moses was the governor, representing government and authority. What came through him was 'Thou shalt and thou shalt not'. Moses governed and exercised authority in Israel. But God is not only like that. Aaron was the man of love and of sympathy. Priesthood means just that - love and sympathy: love for the poor sinner, for the poor sinning world, and sympathy with men. God puts these two things

together. It would not do to have all of one. It would never do to have only an autocrat. You must unite with the governor, the authority, a heart of compassion. If you have those two things put together you have a very good Israel.

Here in this letter it is saying that Jesus, the Son, is better than Moses and Aaron. On the one side He can say: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). The Father said: "Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet" (Hebrews 1:13).

There are two wonderful pictures in this Letter. The one is of Jesus "crowned with glory and honour", having "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" waiting, until His enemies are made 'the footstool of His feet', with all authority in His Power. He is in the place of government. And alongside of that is this other beautiful picture: "For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Hebrews 4:15)... "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Not only authority and government, but love and sympathy - and so much greater than Moses and Aaron. His authority is a greater authority than that of Moses, and His government is a greater one than ever Moses exercised, but His love and sympathy are far greater than that of Aaron.

I am afraid that this is where we have to stop, though I have not finished with the superiority of the Son. We have not touched upon His work - the work of making purification for sin, but you can read it. Perhaps this is just like a window opened into heaven. If you get the right window you can see quite a lot. You can see great things and you can see far things. But the best that I can hope is that this has just opened a window, and that as you look through it you are seeing one thing - how superior is Jesus Christ to all else, and how superior is the dispensation into which we have come, and how superior are all the resources at our disposal to all that ever was before!

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