

The Book Of Hebrews

Part I

Jesus, The incarnate Son of God 1:1-4:13

Lesson 2 (1:1-2:18)

I. God's Final Word Spoken Through His Son (1:1-2:18)

A. The Son, God's ultimate spokesman (1:1-4)

A review of God's communication with man (1:1-2a).

1. In time past (1).
 - Spoke to the fathers.
 - At different times.
 - Employing various methods.
 - By the prophets.
2. In these last days - "Has spoken to us by His Son" (2a). Implied is an ascending rank of spokesman, the Son being the greatest sent. The fact that He has communicated His will by His Son implies the finality of the message and imposes the strictest obligation to obey (Jn 5:18; Mt 21:37). With His Son, the ultimate in all religion has been reached. What more can be added; what more can be said by way of advancing God's revelation! This opening sentence announces the key theme of the first part of the letter.

Elaboration concerning the person of the Son (2b-4)

"Appointed heir (kleronomos) of all things" (2b). The language is taken from Psa 2:8 which homes in on His ability to infinitely bless.

"(1) one who acquires anything by lot; and (2) an *heir* in the sense in which we usually understand the word. It may also denote a *possessor* of anything received as portion, or of property of any kind. See Ro 4:13, 14. It is, in every instance, rendered heir in the New Testament. Applied to Christ, it means that, as the Son of God, he is possessor or lord of all things, or that all things are his... The sense is, that all things belong to the Son of God..." (Barnes; see also Vine).

"Through whom also He made the worlds" (2c) – thus the Father's agent and actively involved in the creation of the things necessary for physical life (Jn 1:3).

"The brightness (apaugasma) of His glory" and "the express image (charakter) of His person" (3a). The phraseology describes His dignity and exalted rank. Noticing the meaning of the Greek helps us to understand what was being said.

1. Apaugasma:
 - "Radiance, effulgence, is used of light shining from a luminous body" (Vine).
 - "Reflected brightness" (Thayer).
 - "It means, properly, reflected splendour, or the light which emanates from a luminous body. The rays or beams of the sun are its 'brightness,' or that by which the sun is seen and known. The sun itself we do not see; he is a being of light and of infinite perfection. It refers to all in God that is bright, splendid, glorious; and the idea is, that the Son of God is the brightness of it all" (Barnes).
2. Charakter:
 - "Denotes, firstly, 'a tool for graving' (from charasso, 'to cut into'), to engrave'... Then, 'a stamp' or 'impress,' as on a coin or a seal, in which case the seal or die which makes an impression, bears the 'image' produced by it, and, vice versa, all the features of the 'image' correspond respectively with those of the instrument producing it" (Vine).

The upholder of all things "by the word of His power" (3b; cf. Rom 1:4).

Our redeemer who "by *Himself* purged our sins" (3c). This introduces the concept that Jesus is our High Priest.

Now occupies the seat "on the right hand of the majesty on high" (3d; cf. Mk 16:19). His redemptive work accomplished He was exalted beyond measure in heaven.

Has "become so much better (kreisson) than the angels" (4). This is a transitional statement. How much better? This much better. "He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name" (cf. 1:21). Notice the following, esp. That "by inheritance obtained" derives from one Greek word.

Kreisson denotes "more useful, more serviceable, more advantageous" (Thayer).

"By inheritance obtained... The verb signifies generally to participate, possess, obtain, or acquire; and is so used by the purest Greek writers: Kypke has produced several examples of it from Demosthenes. It is not by inheritance that Christ possesses a more excellent name than angels, but as God: he has it naturally and essentially; and, as God manifested in the flesh, he has it in consequence of his humiliation, sufferings, and meritorious death (See Phil 2:9)" (Clarke).

"The Jews had the highest opinion of the transcendent excellence of angels, they even associate them with God in the creation of the world, and suppose them to be of the privy council of the Most High; and thus they understand (Gen 1:26): Let us make man in our own image, in our own likeness; 'And the Lord said to the ministering angels that stood before him, and who were created the second day, Let us make man,' of Jonathan ben Uzziel. And they even allow them to be worshipped for the sake of their Creator, and as his representatives; though they will not allow them to be worshipped for their own sake. As, therefore, the Jews considered them next to God, and none entitled to their adoration but God; on their own ground the apostle proves Jesus Christ to be God, because God commanded all the angels of heaven to worship him. He, therefore, who is greater than the angels, and is the object of their adoration, is God. But Jesus Christ is greater than the angels, and the object of their adoration; therefore Jesus Christ must be God" (Clarke).

B. The more excellent name of the Son (1:5-14)

The writer proceeds to quote from several passages each describing either the Son or the angels and their position and place in the heavenly realm. When the descriptives of the Son are examined it is seen that He possessed a name that is more excellent than that of the angels.

On account of the heavenly recognition of His superior ranking (5 with Ps 2:7; 2 Sam 7:14)

Because He was to be worshipped by the angels (6)

The citation concerning the firstborn/firstbegotten is likely from Psa 89:27. The second causes some difficulty amongst scholars because the precise equivalent for "Let all God's angels worship Him" is not found in the Hebrew manuscripts. However they do appear in the Septuagint rendering of Dt 32:43 and substantially so in Psa 97:7. "Elohiym" rendered gods in the English versions can have the sense of angels. It is so in the Septuagint. The context of Dt 32 had to do with the future history of Israel after Moses' death; on the other hand Psa 97 was understood by the Jews of that day to have reference to the Messiah and so would be a suitable passage to bring forward to establish the superiority of Christ over the angels (Barnes).

On account of their inferior office (7; Psa 104:4)

"He gives to them an inferior name, and assigns to them a more humble office. They are mere ministers, and have not ascribed to them the name of Son. They have a name which implies a more humble rank and office - the name 'spirit,' and the appellation of a 'flame of fire.' They obey his will as the winds and the lightnings do. The 'object' of the apostle in this passage is to show that the angels serve God in a ministerial capacity - as the winds do; while the Son is Lord of all" (Barnes).

By virtue of the fact and character of His rule, and His consequent superior status (8-9; Psa 45:6-8)

Addressed as "God (theos)" His throne is forever and ever (8)

He would love righteousness and hate iniquity and so it was said of Him "Your God has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your companions" (9).

On account of the unchanging nature of His person (10-12; Psa 102:25-27)

The Psalm was undoubtedly directed to Jehovah and so the question arises as to why the writer applied it to the Messiah! Nevertheless whatever the explanation for selecting this passage, he clearly intended it to be so applied.

Not only is His throne forever and ever (8) so is the Messiah. The argument is made by citing the most permanent things which man knows – the heavens and the earth. They were brought into existence by Him and after they have gone He will remain. They will be rolled up and put to one side just like a garment which is no longer fit for use.

By His exaltation over the angels (13-14; Ps 110:1).

C. The conclusion to be drawn - we must give the more earnest heed to the things heard (2:1-4)

The imperative (1)

On account of the greatness of the speaker, His exalted dignity over the angels - the things He has spoken deserve even greater attention than those of these heavenly beings. Here the reason for the comparison is made evident. Perhaps the writer felt that the humanity of Jesus and His humble appearance made His testimony seem to be less important. He foresaw the danger that His words would be allowed to drift out of reach as if carried by the current of a stream.

The reason why unwavering diligence is critical (2-3a)

If the OT revelation delivered by angels had been steadfast (bebaios), that is having determined the presence of sin did not vacillate or fluctuate so that every violation– transgression (parabasis) or disobedience (parakoe) - received its just punishment, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation" (3a).

Although the Mosaic Law originated with God, in some way the angels were involved in its communication to the Israelites (Ac 7:38, 53; Gal 3:19).

It is on the greatness of the salvation that the emphasis should be placed. In verses 3b through 4 the writer elaborates upon this greatness.

Word definitions.

- Bebaios: "Stable, fast, firm" (Thayer).
- Parabasis: "Primarily 'a going aside,' then, 'an overstepping,' is used metaphorically to denote 'transgression'" (Thayer).
- Parakoe: "Primarily, 'hearing amiss' (para, 'aside,' akouo, 'to hear'), hence signifies 'a refusal to hear'; hence, 'an act of disobedience...'" (Vine).

Three points that mark out the greatness of the salvation (3b-4):

It was at the first spoken by the Lord (3b).

These things were then confirmed "to us" by those who heard him (3c).

God bearing witness to the truth of the testimony with signs, wonders, miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit (4).

II. The Need For The Incarnation Explained (2:5-18)

A. The great salvation as it relates to man's dominion over the world (2:5-8)

The subject of the incarnation introduced (5)

The book opened by emphasizing the deity of Jesus – His Sonship to God (1:1-4). But for a period He was made incarnate – "a little lower than the angels" (2:7). The writer now reflects upon His humanity (2:5-18). The crucifixion had been to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness (1 Cor 1:18, 23); this passage shows why becoming a man, suffering and dying upon the cross had been necessary to make this great salvation possible.

The passage Begins with a transitional statement. Continuing the thought of the superior position and name of the Son over angels the writer adds that He "has not put the world (oikoumene) to come... in subjection to angels". By the world is meant the inhabited world of the Messianic age, a world which was already in place at time of writing. Oikoumene signifies "the inhabited earth" (Vine) and it was this era of man's existence that was under consideration. He next showed how this dominion over the world had been given to the human race at creation (6-8).

God's care manifested in the creation (6-8; Ps 8:4-6)

The destiny appointed to man (6-8a). Reading on in the psalm it is evident that reference is being made to Gen 1:26-28. The dominion under discussion is that which was given to mankind in general. It is not a specific Messianic Psalm. Nevertheless it applies to Jesus inasmuch as He was made incarnate and so became a man. He had in mind the lot assigned to the human race at creation - His intention for them, their appointed destiny in the beginning.

The apparent shortfall in the original intention (8b-c). In that all was subjected to man there is nothing which is not under his domain and yet observation would suggest that this is not as things are. Not stated as yet - the exception is death (15). The intention set out in Genesis 1 was not immediately fulfilled; the creation narrative is followed by a description of the events in Eden (2:16-3:24) in consequence of which men "through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (2:15).

B. Man's appointed destiny realised through Jesus (2:9-13)

Jesus crowned with glory and honour (9)

What is not seen in man is seen in Jesus (9a; cf. 7). Jesus tasted death so that by God's grace all might be crowned as Jesus was crowned and thus achieve through Him God's original intention (9b).

The Divine means of achieving His purpose (10-13)

The sufferings and death of Christ worthy of God (10). "It was fitting (no discredit to God)... in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." It was not only for Himself that He was crowned with glory and honour - He tasted of death for everyone. Coffman points to the problem posed by the word "perfect": "For how can the author speak of Christ being made perfect when he is already perfect?" Bruce comments: "The perfect Son of God has become the people's perfect Saviour, opening up their way to God; and in order to become that, he must endure suffering and death."

The kinship between sanctifier and sanctified elaborated (11-13). These verses give further explanation about the familial relationship.

"He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified" (11a). These terms are used in reference to Jesus Christ and those who were "perfected" (10:10, 14, 29; 13:12).

"Of one." The context would indicate that this means of one family. Firstly, Jesus Christ is the Son of the Father (1:2). Secondly, in His design the Father determined to have other sons, "to bring many sons to glory" (10). Thirdly, this relationship being established, "He (the Christ) is not ashamed to call them brethren". Lastly, for verification he turned to the OT where the Messiah uttered these words or similar sentiments. "I will declare your name to my brethren..." (12) is taken from Psalm 22:22 and "I will put my trust in Him" (13) probably from Psa 18:2. There are several suggestions for the second quotation of v. 13 among which are Psa 40:10, 111:1 and Isa 8:18.

C. Further explanations of the incarnation and death of Jesus (2:14-18)

Since those who were to become children consisted of flesh and blood it was necessary for Him to share in the same for three reasons (14a, b):

1. That "through death" or by the act of dying He might subdue the devil. In order to die, he first had to become a man (14c).
2. To release those who through fear of death were in bondage (15).

That He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest (16-18). It was His experiences as a man that prepared Him to be a merciful High Priest (18) and His incarnate state (being made like His brethren) that enabled Him in God's service to make propitiation for the sins of man (17).