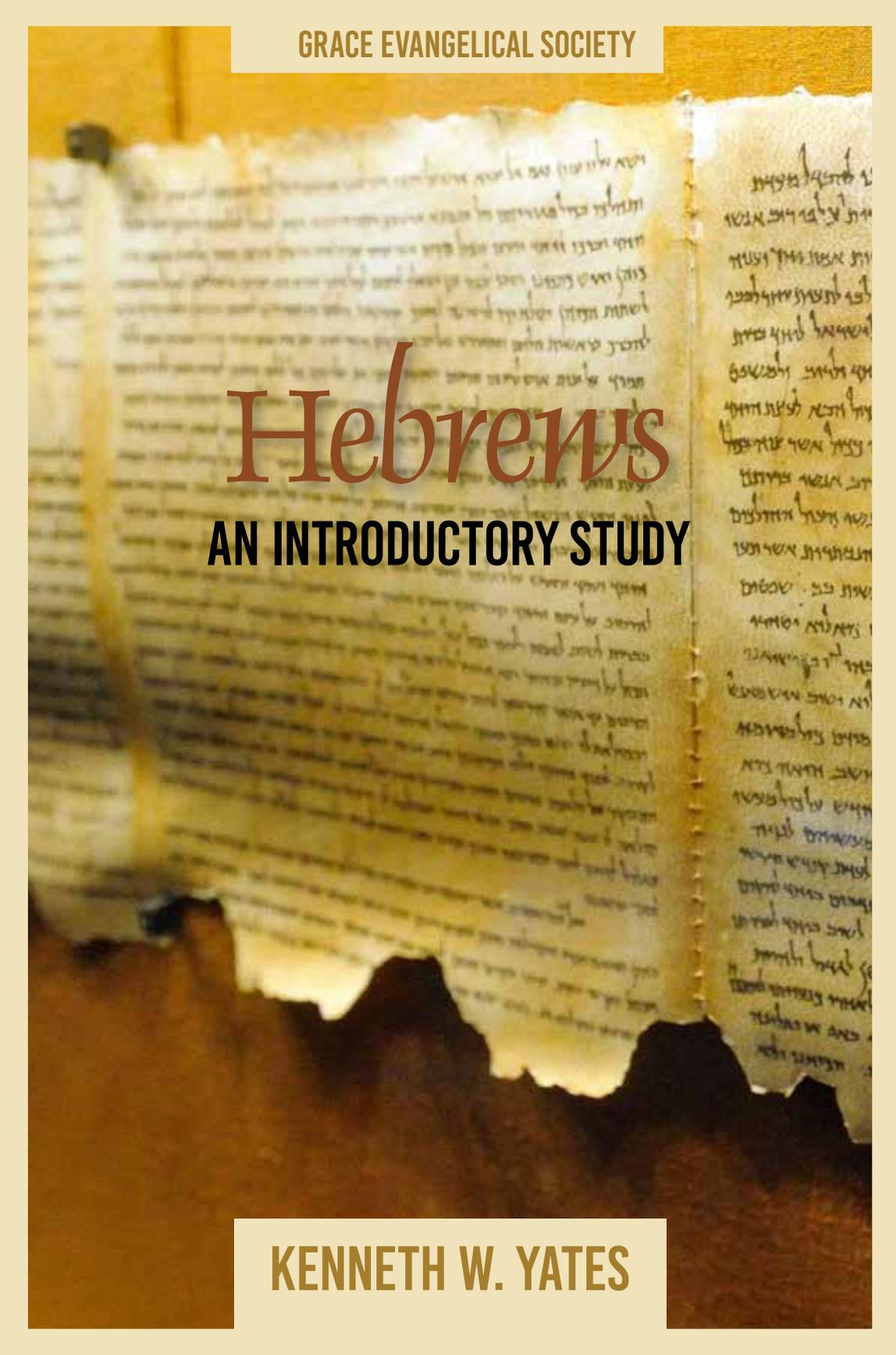


GRACE EVANGELICAL SOCIETY



Hebrews

AN INTRODUCTORY STUDY

KENNETH W. YATES

Hebrews: An Introductory Study

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HEBREWS 1

Christ Is the King

THE FIRST FOUR VERSES of Hebrews are often called the prologue. In it, the author introduces the readers to the two offices of Jesus Christ discussed in detail in the book: King and High Priest.

Jesus is both.

This sets the stage for the book. Because of the greatness of Christ, if His people listen to His words, they can expect great rewards. If they disobey Him, they can expect severe negative consequences.

The Prologue (1:1-4)

¹ God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ² has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; ³ who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

God has revealed Himself to His people. To the Jews, God spoke to the **fathers by the prophets** (v 1). This is a reference to the OT and strongly indicates that the original readers, though now Christians, were Jewish.

To the Jews in the OT, God spoke in **various times** and **various ways**. The words include the idea that God spoke by revealing Himself in parts. That is, the revelation of Himself in the past was in fragments and not complete. He did this in many ways—we can think about how God did this through the prophets. He spoke to them through things like dreams, visions, thunder, a burning bush, angels, and even a *still small voice* (1 Kgs 19:12).

As wonderful as these revelations were, things have changed. God has now spoken in the **last days** (v 2). This indicates that He has now given His final revelation of Himself. There won't be any more revelation.

Contrary to popular opinion, the last days did not begin in 1948 or 1967. The last days began with Jesus' ascension into heaven. The ministry of the Apostles took place during the last days (cf. Jas 5:9; 2 Pet 3:3; 1 John 2:18; Jude 18; Rev 22:12, 20).

The reason there won't be any more revelation is because now God has **spoken** to us in **His Son**. This means that God's revelation of Himself is no longer in fragments. It is complete. There will be no more because He has given the perfect revelation. In His Son, God has said His final word.

The OT was given through prophets and angels (Acts 7:53; Heb 2:2). The original readers rightfully held the OT in high esteem. If this is the case for what was only in fragments, how much more should they hold the words of Jesus Christ in high esteem? As the author will shortly say—and it is obvious—the Son is much greater than the OT prophets and angels.

Here the author introduces another idea that will be important in the book. As mentioned in the introduction, the readers were Jewish Christians who were thinking about abandoning Christianity and going back to Judaism. The author says that the revelation found in Christianity in the NT, as given by Jesus Christ, is much greater than what God has said in the past in the OT. Christianity is far superior to Judaism.

The description of Jesus Christ in the rest of the prologue shows why He is the perfect and final revelation of God. In the OT there was the office of the prophet. Jesus Christ is God's perfect prophet.

First of all, Jesus is the **heir of all things**. The idea behind these words is found in Psalm 2, from which the author of Hebrews will quote in v 5. In this Psalm, the Son is the King. What the Son will inherit are the nations of the earth. This points to a future day when Christ will own and rule the world to come. A seven-year Tribulation will follow the Rapture of the Church. After the Tribulation, Christ will return and rule upon the earth for one thousand years. Afterward, He will create a new heaven and earth and will rule forever.

It is only right that He would be the King of the world to come and that this kingdom would belong to Him. After all, He **made the worlds**. The word for *worlds* is literally “ages.” This could refer to the fact that Christ made all the worlds—all the planets, the earth, the stars, etc. Or it could refer to both the seen and unseen worlds, including the spiritual world. If the Jews saw angels as being very important, they are reminded here that Christ created them, since they are a part of the spiritual world.

The idea that Christ created the *ages* could also signify that He is the One who is carrying all of history—all the ages of time—to their conclusion. He will bring in His kingdom over which He will rule. His word will bring all this about.

Whatever the meaning of the word “worlds” is, one thing is clear— Christ created all things. One day He will inherit all that He made. It will belong to Him.

The greatness of Jesus Christ is also seen in His description in v 3. He is the **brightness of His glory**. The glory of God shines forth in Jesus Christ. The idea of glory probably relates to God’s power. The power of God was seen in Jesus through the miracles He performed, including raising the dead, as well as on the Mount of Transfiguration where the disciples observed His glory.

Jesus is also the **express image of His person**. The idea in the Greek is that Jesus is the exact representation of God. If we want to know what God is like in essence and character, we only have to look at the Son. Everything that God is, Jesus is. Jesus specifically taught that the one who sees Him had seen the Father (John 14:9).

This is why Jesus is the perfect and final revelation of God. He *is* God. Many have commented that this description of Jesus Christ is one of the clearest statements in the Bible that Jesus Christ is

God. There could be no better revelation. The prophets and angels of the OT could not even hope to be on par with Him.

The power of Christ's words is also seen in that He upholds **all things by the word of His power**. The whole universe is held together by what He says. He is bringing all of history to its goal—His kingdom. When One like that speaks, He should be obeyed! To abandon His teaching and publicly renounce Him to return to Judaism would be the height of foolishness.

But Jesus is even more than the King who will inherit everything. The author of Hebrews introduces the idea of the other office that Jesus holds—that of High Priest. He states that **He had by Himself purged our sins**. Associated with this idea is the fact that Jesus **sat down at the right hand** of God. The author of Hebrews will spend a great deal of time discussing in chapters 5–10 that Jesus is our High Priest. Our High Priest sacrificed Himself for His people. This sacrifice paid for the sins of His people once for all.

Also, this sacrifice was perfect. It was so complete there is no need for any more sacrifices. That is why He has “sat down.” His work is finished. There is no more that needs to be done for the sins of His people.

The fact that He is at the right hand of God shows that He occupies the most exalted position in the universe. He has supreme authority. Jesus said that He would occupy that position (Luke 22:69; Matt 22:43-44). It anticipates the authority He will have forever.

The amazing thing is that He had to die to bring this about. The One who is described in the prologue, the One who is the Creator and the all-powerful King of the world to come, did that for His people.

This One is **so much better than the angels**, and He has a **more excellent name** than they do. No angel is seated at the right hand of God. No angel has made purification for the sins of God's people. No angel has His name.

The **name** that Christ has inherited is **Son**. The author will discuss that name in vv 5-14. As will be seen, this name means He will be the King of the eternal kingdom to come. That is not true of any angel.

The phrase *much better* is a favorite in the Book of Hebrews. It is used thirteen times in the book. The basic argument is that Christianity is much better than Judaism. Judaism, including sects of Judaism like the one found at Qumran, placed a great deal of importance on the angels. But here the author already indicates how much greater Christianity is than Judaism, and Christ is than the angels. He is God. As such, His sacrifice is greater than any OT sacrifice. He is greater than any king or high priest found in Judaism. He is greater than any revelation found in Judaism. Listen to Him!

In the following verses, the author of Hebrews expounds on the **name** Jesus Christ has inherited—the Son. This title will drive the discussion throughout the first chapters of the book.

Jesus Christ, the Son, Is Greater than the Angels (1:5-14)

⁵ For to which of the angels did He ever say:

*“You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You”?*

And again:

*“I will be to Him a Father,
And He shall be to Me a Son”?*

**⁶ But when He again brings the firstborn into the world,
He says:**

“Let all the angels of God worship Him.”

⁷ And of the angels He says:

*“Who makes His angels spirits
And His ministers a flame of fire.”*

⁸ But to the Son He says:

*“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;
A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your
kingdom.*

*⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.”*

¹⁰ And:

*“You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the
earth,
And the heavens are the work of Your hands.*

- ¹¹ *They will perish, but You remain;
And they will all grow old like a garment;*
¹² *Like a cloak You will fold them up,
And they will be changed.
But You are the same,
And Your years will not fail.”*
- ¹³ **But to which of the angels has He ever said:
“Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”?**
- ¹⁴ **Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to
minister for those who will inherit salvation?**

To make his case that Jesus is greater than the angels, the author appeals to the OT. This would make sense if he were writing to people who had high regard for those Scriptures. The revelation found in the writings of Judaism makes a case for the supremacy of God’s Son.

The Son is King (Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7)

In the prologue, the author stated that Jesus has a name greater than any angel. That name is here identified. In v 5 it is given. Jesus is the **Son**. But it is also obvious here that Jesus is compared to the angels. God has never called an angel by that name.

The prologue has just stated that Jesus is God. Since God is eternal, Jesus has always been God. However, we see here that Jesus inherited the name of *Son* in a special sense at a specific point in time. This special sense is understood by the way the author of Hebrews quotes from the OT. He uses two passages. One is from Psalm 2. The other is from 2 Sam 7:14.

First, he quotes from Psalm 2 which is an example of an “Enthronement Psalm.” In these Psalms, a man in the OT becomes King of Israel. On the day he becomes king of the nation, he inherits the title of “son.” As the King of Israel, he becomes the son of God upon earth.

The title **Son**, then, carries with it the idea of King. The idea of the King as the son of God on earth was part of the promise that God gave to David in 2 Sam 7:14, which the author of Hebrews

quotes in the second part of v 5 here. The descendants of David who sat on the throne of the nation would be the “sons” of God. They were the representatives of God. God said these kings would be His sons and He would be their **Father**.

Of course, these earthly kings of Israel only foreshadowed the real King who was to come. They pointed to Him. Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of Psalm 2, just as He is the ultimate fulfillment of the promise God gave to David in 2 Samuel.

But what is the meaning of the phrase from Psalm 2, “**today I have begotten you**”? It is easy to see how this applies to the kings in the OT. On the day they were crowned king, they became a son of God in a special way. But if Jesus was always God and is eternal, how does it relate to Him? How can it be said that He was **begotten** on a certain day?

It seems highly likely that what the author has in mind is the day that Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father (1:3). On that day He had done everything necessary to be the King of the world to come. He had purged His people’s sins. He had done all that was needed to ensure that men and women would reign with Him in His coming kingdom, an idea that will be discussed in detail in chapter 2. Because of His completed work, Christ entered a new relationship with His Father and His people. On the day of His exaltation to the right hand of His Father, all the prerogatives of being King were His. He was declared the Son of God in this special sense at that time. This is the same point made in Rom 1:4 in which Paul states that Christ was “declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

In the rest of the OT quotes that follow in this chapter, the author will continue to discuss the idea that Jesus is the King. A major point in this section is that no angel will rule the world to come. Jesus, since He is the King, will.

But in these OT quotes, there is also the idea that the King will defeat His enemies. This idea is present in Psalm 2 which the author uses here in v 5 (see Ps 2:1-3, 9-12). This is important because the original readers of Hebrews were being persecuted by the enemies of the King.

Jesus Is the Firstborn Son (Psalm 97)

In v 6 the author says that God will bring **His firstborn Son into the world**. This most likely refers to the time when Christ returns to rule over the world to come (see 2:5). In the OT the firstborn son had authority over all other sons. Christ will have that authority. Christ will inherit all things on that day (1:2).

In the second half of this verse, he quotes from Psalm 97. This Psalm also speaks of the time the Messiah sets up His kingdom, that is, when Jesus returns (see Ps 97:1-6). As with Psalm 2, Psalm 97 also states that when Christ returns, He will defeat all His enemies (Ps 97:3, 10-11).

The main point the author makes here, however, is that the Son, Jesus Christ, will be the King. The angels will not be kings. In fact, the angels will **worship Him!** If the readers were thinking about turning away from Christ and going back to a religion that emphasized the role of angels in the kingdom of God, they might want to think again! In the following verses, the author compares the role of Jesus and the role of angels in that kingdom.

The Role of Angels (Psalm 104)

Here in v 7 the author quotes from Psalm 104 in which we see that God's **angels** are **spirits**. The word for *spirit* can also be translated "wind." That may be preferable here. The reason this is the case is that angels are also called **a flame of fire**.

The point here is that angels are a part of God's creation, just as wind and fire are. Jesus Christ is God, and therefore He created everything, including angels. That is why they worship Him.

As part of creation, they can be changed. In the following verses, we will see that Jesus the Son is not part of creation. He does not change.

Another aspect here is that God can change the works of His hands to do His will. God **makes** the angels do His bidding.

Taking all these things together, we see that angels will serve the King. The King creates them. The King, who is the Son, is infinitely greater.

The Son Is God and Has Companions (Psalm 45)

In comparing the role of Jesus Christ to the angels in the world to come, the author turns to Psalm 45 here in vv 8-9. As with Psalms 2 and 97, this Psalm also says that the King will defeat all His enemies (Ps 45:3-5). Since all of His enemies will be defeated, His **throne** will be established **forever and ever**. He will have no opposition.

In this Psalm Jesus the Messiah is specifically called **God**. He is the One who created the angels. The Son in Psalm 2, the Son of the promise made to David in 2 Samuel 7, and the King of Psalm 45 all point to the same Person. As King, since He is the eternal God, He will reign forever.

His **kingdom** will be one of **righteousness**. The Son is worthy to rule that kingdom because He **loved righteousness and hated lawlessness**.

It needs to be noted that unlike Psalm 2, Psalm 45 is not an Enthronement Psalm. It does not speak about when the King is crowned. Instead, it is a Marriage Psalm. It talks about the wedding of the King. At that wedding, in particular, at the wedding feast, the King is **anointed** with the **oil of gladness**.

The feast will be a time of gladness. The King will be glad because as a righteous King, He has inherited a righteous kingdom. But the Psalm states that the King will not be alone in this celebration. Others will share in His joy.

Those who share this joy with the King are called **companions**. The picture here is the King who is having a feast. There are those who are at the head table with Him. The Greek word for *companion* (*metachoi*) signifies a close friend. Perhaps an equivalent in our time would be the President's cabinet. Those in his cabinet are close to the President.

An example of the meaning of this word is seen in Luke 5:7. Peter is fishing with his business "partners." This is the same word as *companions* used here in Hebrews. These were his close friends, those with whom he spent his time.

This is an important concept in the Book of Hebrews. When the King returns and sets up His kingdom, He will be particularly close to His *companions*, His close friends.

And who will these close friends be? It will be those who are like Him—those who loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. It will be those who have been faithful to Him.

The author will later use the same word in Heb 3:14 in which He says that believers will be the *companions* of Christ, “if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end” (emphasis added).

One can easily see how this applies to the first readers. They were thinking of renouncing Christ and going back to Judaism. If they did that and did not hold steadfast to the end, they would not be the *companions* or partners of the King when He returned. They would be *in* the kingdom, but they would not be in those *positions of honor*.

Once again we can see how this applies to the President in our day. He has those who are particularly close to him. There are many people who are citizens of the United States and live in this country who are not his “companions.” Only those who have faithfully served the President fit this description.

In the Book of Hebrews, this is the first indication of rewards. Jesus will **inherit all things** (1:2). But He will share His inheritance with His *partners*—those who have been faithful to Him. They will be great in His kingdom. They will have an inheritance in that kingdom. But unfaithfulness will result in the loss of that reward.

The Son Never Changes (Psalm 102)

In vv 10-12, the author quotes from Ps 102:25-27. Like the previous Psalms quoted in this section, Psalm 102 also mentions the enemies of the King (Ps 102:8). But the major point here is that the King will never change. Psalm 45 said that His throne will be forever. If He is to rule forever, He must be eternal and not subject to change.

It is interesting that God is speaking in this Psalm. He is speaking about the Son, and He calls the Son **Lord**. Whom would God call Lord? This is another statement that Jesus is God. The **earth and the heavens are the work** of Jesus.

The Psalm goes on to say that the present creation **will perish** (cf. Matt 5:18; 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33; 2 Pet 3:10-12; Rev 20:1-3). But Christ will **remain**. The day will come when Christ

will roll up the universe like an old coat, that is, **like a garment** that no longer has a use. It will be replaced by another one. This will happen after Jesus rules for one thousand years and He creates a new heaven and earth.

The universe itself **will be changed**, but Christ will remain **the same**. The point is that Christ's kingdom will survive even the universe. His kingdom will include the millennial kingdom and then will go on into the eternal state.

Of course, this had tremendous application to the original readers. Their present world was persecuting them. They were tempted to give up. The author is telling them that the troubles of this present world are temporary because the present world itself is temporary. They should keep their eyes on the coming eternal kingdom of Christ.

The Son Will Defeat His Enemies (Psalm 110)

In vv 13-14, the author concludes his OT quotes which compare Jesus with the angels. In all the Psalms quoted, it was implied that the King would defeat all of His **enemies**.

In v 13, the author quotes from Psalm 110. The day will come when all the **enemies** of the King are placed under His feet—they will become His **footstool**. If God's people, like the original readers, were being oppressed by the enemies of the King, they should find comfort in knowing that one day their King will defeat their persecutors.

Psalm 110 is crucial to the Book of Hebrews. It was alluded to in 1:3, is quoted here, and will be quoted again in 5:6. The Jews believed that the Psalm predicted the coming Messiah. Hebrews is written to Jewish Christians. The author is saying that Jesus is the fulfillment of this Psalm.

The main point here is that when Jesus comes and defeats His enemies, His people will share in that victory. Angels will not, as some Jews felt, rule the world to come. Instead, angels are simply those who **minister to those who will inherit salvation**.

This raises a couple of questions. First, what is the **salvation** here? And second, who are those who **will inherit** that salvation?

In all the Psalms quoted in 1:5-14, **salvation** means *deliverance from the enemies of the people of God*. The King will deliver His people and they will share in the benefits of that victory.

The salvation here is not salvation from hell. Notice that the author talks about a salvation in the *future*—those who *will* inherit salvation (contra present salvation, John 3:16-17; Eph 2:8-9). Throughout the book, as we will see, the author understands that his readers are believers. A believer already has eternal life and salvation from hell. Jesus made this clear in verses like John 5:24. To the woman at the well, Jesus said that if she believed in Him, she would have eternal life within her, and she would retain it forever (John 4:10-14). Here, in this verse, the author of Hebrews is talking about something the readers *do not yet have*. He cannot be talking about salvation from eternal condemnation because the believer already has that (John 3:18, 36; 5:24).

The word *salvation* has the basic meaning of “deliverance.” The *salvation* here refers to the deliverance Jesus will bring His people when He returns—in the future. His people will share in His victory when He defeats His enemies.

Christ’s inheritance is to rule the world to come (1:2). It will belong to Him. But He will share that inheritance with His companions. They will rule with Him. Not all believers will rule with Christ. While all believers will experience salvation from hell, not all believers will rule.

The author of Hebrews is telling his readers to hold on. The King is coming. He will deliver you—save you—from all your enemies. In that victory, He will reward those who have been faithful to Him. We might say they will share in the spoils of His victory. What a great *salvation* that will be!

Even though many believe that all Christians will be equal in the kingdom, the NT does not teach that. In His parables, the Lord taught that some believers will rule over ten cities, some five cities, and some will not rule over any. Paul taught that only those believers who are faithful to the Lord and suffer with Him will reign with Him (Rom 8:17; 2 Tim 2:11-13). These are the “companions” of the Lord. They are faithful to the Lord in the midst of persecution by His enemies. Christ promises to “save” them from that persecution. They are to hold firm to the end. They

are the ones that wait for the righteous kingdom He will bring, in spite of the difficulties the enemies of the King throw at them.

All believers are offered this “salvation,” but not all will obtain it. Those that obtain it are those that will experience deliverance from their troubles when the King returns. That is the point of the Book of Hebrews. Only those who remain faithful to the King will share in His rule. The warning passages in the book are directed toward those believers who are contemplating being unfaithful to Him and throwing all that away.

Angels serve those who are called to reign with Christ. Angels will not rule the world to come; faithful men and women will. Because men and women will rule the world to come, the Son had to become one of them. That is the subject of the second chapter of Hebrews.

Application

It may be difficult for the modern-day reader to put himself in the shoes of the original readers of Hebrews. Many of us have not experienced persecution for our faith. We have never been faced with the temptation to reject Christianity for our safety.

However, the message here in chapter 1 is timeless. In Christ, we see the coming eternal King. When we believe in Jesus Christ for eternal life, we receive it as a free gift. However, Christ offers His people even more. He calls every believer to be one of His intimate companions in His kingdom. Christ will own the kingdom over which He rules, and He wants to give His followers a share in that inheritance. There is a difference between being in a place and inheriting that place. There is a difference between being in the kingdom and being great in the kingdom.

Imagine if, when the King returns, He made you a partner with Him in ruling His kingdom. Imagine being in the cabinet of the King. Being faithful to Him in this life is difficult, whatever age in which we live. But He promises to come and deliver us from these things and reward faithfulness toward Him. Not all believers will receive this “salvation” from Him. All believers will be in the kingdom, but as the Book of Hebrews will spell out, including in the warning passages, some believers will experience the loss of eternal rewards.

The first warning passage occurs in the next verses.

The King Became a Man

THROUGHOUT THE BOOK OF Hebrews, the author develops a certain pattern: to teach and then follow with a warning passage. That is the case here. In chapter 1 he has just said that there is a salvation that is coming for the people of God. This salvation is not the same thing as “going to heaven.” Instead, it is a reward for believers who are faithful to the Lord. It involves *inheriting* the kingdom of God, which is different from *entering* the kingdom. Those who obtain this inheritance will be the *partners* of Christ and will rule with Him.

In chapter 2, the author will continue discussing the fact that Christ will rule the world to come. However, before he does, he takes a break from this discussion with a warning for his readers.

What about those believers who do not remain faithful? That is the point of the five warning passages in the book. We find the first such warning in chapter 2.

The First Warning Passage (2:1-4)

¹ Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. ² For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, ⁴ God also bearing witness both with signs and

wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

There is a clear connection with this first warning passage and chapter 1. We see this in the word **therefore** (v 1) and the word **salvation** (v 3). The author spoke about this salvation with the very last word of chapter 1.

It is also clear that the author is speaking to believers. He includes himself when he says that we **must give more earnest heed to the things we have heard**. The Christian readers had heard about this coming salvation which Christ was going to bring to His people.

The Danger (v 1)

The danger was that they could **drift away** from what they had heard. Specifically, that Christ would rule the world to come and that believers could rule with Him. The idea that they could drift away from that paints a picture of a boat drifting away from a dock because the rope has come loose. The same thing could happen in a spiritual sense to these believers.

The dock was a place of security. The teachings that these believers had heard were their anchor and provided a place of refuge in a hostile world. They needed to hold on to these things lest they drift away from them.

Part of the reason they were in danger of drifting is that they were immature believers. The author will point that out in 5:11-12. Certainly we see an application here. Spiritual defeat is a real danger to believers who do not mature in their faith and walk with the Lord.

The original readers had an extra danger. They were being persecuted for their faith, as will be seen in the rest of the book. When faced with difficulties, it is easy to forget the things we have been taught and focus on the hard times we are going through. That will cause us to drift away from what Christ has told us.

The Reason to Watch Out (vv 2-4)

In chapter 1 the author said that Christ is greater than the angels. He now points out that the things **spoken through angels**

were to be obeyed. The people of God who disobeyed what the angels said received a **just reward**, that is, a deserved punishment. Since Christ is greater than the angels, if we disobey Him we can expect punishment as well.

The word spoken by angels is a reference to the OT Law of Moses. Many Jews in the first century held that the Law of Moses was given through angels, and there are verses in the Bible that bear that out. These include the Greek translation of Deut 33:2, as well as Ps 68:17. In the NT the idea is present in Gal 3:19 and Acts 7:53.

Once again we need not suggest that the punishment here refers to going to hell. Many people in the OT were punished by God, but they were not sent to hell. The author will speak of such people in chapters 3–4. But we can think of someone like David in the OT. Clearly he was a believer, but he disobeyed God and was punished. His newborn son died; he had serious troubles within his family; and his kingdom was ripped away from him because he disobeyed God.

To **neglect so great a salvation** is not the same as neglecting the promise of everlasting life. As we saw in chapter 1, *salvation* in Hebrews is being one of Christ's partners (Greek, *metachoi*) in the life to come (Heb 1:9; 3:14). Neglecting this great salvation is the same as drifting away from what they had heard.

The word *neglect* means "to be unconcerned about something." The readers are to keep their minds focused on what Christ taught about His return. If they take their eyes off of it, they are in danger of forgetting these things. This could end up in disobedience and the resulting punishment.

Notice once again that the author includes himself in this warning. He says that **we** shall not **escape** if we neglect the salvation and reward Christ offers His people. It is interesting that the author does not tell his readers what the punishment will be. One could say that the punishment is that the Christian who neglects this coming salvation will not be one of the partners of Christ, that is, they won't rule with Him. But it may be that the author leaves the punishment vague. All he says here is that for those who ignore what Jesus has said and are disobedient to

those things will certainly suffer loss. God is able to discipline His children in many different ways!

The author points out that these things were indeed **spoken by the Lord**. Jesus often taught about the opportunity for believers to be great in the kingdom of God, that is, to rule in it (Matt 5:3, 5, 7, 9-10; 25:34-35; Luke 6:20; 12:31-32; 22:29-30). **Those who** actually **heard** the Lord speak of these things **confirmed** them to others.

Those who heard (the Lord speak) refers primarily to the Apostles. They confirmed what they heard through their eyewitness accounts. They also spoke about being great in the kingdom. But **with signs and wonders** and **with various miracles**, they also demonstrated the truth of what they and the Lord said. The Book of Acts is a record of these miracles. Acts is a book that speaks of the coming kingdom of God (Acts 1:3, 6; 28:31).

In the Book of Acts the apostles performed the same types of miracles that Christ had performed. They did these things through His power. Since Christ was at the right hand of God (Heb 1:13), He was all-powerful (Acts 4:30; 14:3). These miracles demonstrated that Christ had the power to defeat His enemies and bring in His kingdom.

The references to **God** as well as the **gifts of the Holy Spirit** show that not only Christ and the Apostles taught the things the readers needed to pay attention to; all three members of the Trinity did. In view of all these things, the readers would understand the seriousness of the things said. To neglect such teaching would result in severe consequences.

This first warning passage was a short digression in the discussion about Christ's ruling the world to come. Now the author returns to that topic.

Mankind Will Rule with Christ (vv 5-18)

In chapter 1, Jesus is presented as the King who is also God. Now the author adds a new idea: the God-King became a human being. This means that mankind—men and women—will share in Christ's destiny to rule in His kingdom. Jesus has done everything that is needed in order for this to take place.

Jesus Became a Man (vv 5-9)

⁵ For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. ⁶ But one testified in a certain place, saying:

*“What is man that You are mindful of him,
Or the son of man that You take care of him?”*

⁷ *You have made him a little lower than the angels;
You have crowned him with glory and honor,
And set him over the works of Your hands.*

⁸ *You have put all things in subjection under his feet.”*

For in *that* He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. ⁹ But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

The word **for** in v 5 connects this verse with what was said before. Chapter 1 spoke of the fact that Jesus, as the Son, will rule the **world to come**. This coming kingdom will not be ruled by **angels**. Once again we see that Christ is greater than the angels.

All things will be **in subjection to** Christ. The author is about to say that mankind can share in that subjection. This is the salvation the author is talking about (1:14; 2:3). It is not simply “going to heaven,” but ruling the world to come. The warning passage that was just given (2:1-4) is a warning that Christians can miss that privilege.

In the present time, angels have certain governmental roles (see Eph 6:12; Dan 10:12-13, 20-21). But whatever role they have now, they will not rule in the kingdom of God; mankind will.

To prove his point, he once again quotes from the OT. To Jewish Christians who respected the OT, the author shows that God has always determined that men and women will rule the world to come.

In vv 6-8 he quotes from Ps 8:4-6. Many see Psalm 8 as describing the role that mankind currently plays in God’s creation. Mankind was certainly created to rule over God’s creation (Gen 1:26). David, the author of the Psalm, looks at the greatness of God’s creation and marvels that God has placed man **over the**

works of His hands. Today man is in an exalted position. In this sense, God has **crowned him with glory and honor.** The **glory and honor** here are to rule over what God has made.

However these verses can apply to mankind in general, it is clear that the author of Hebrews sees them as referring to one particular man—Jesus Christ. In the context, he is describing the world to come.

That the author does not have in mind primarily man's current role in God's creation is seen in the fact that at this time we do not see **all things in subjection under his feet.** Mankind still lives in a fallen world. Certainly the original readers of Hebrews, who were experiencing persecution, understood this fact. They were not ruling over the world in which they lived!

If indeed these verses are describing Jesus Christ, it is not a surprise that Psalm 8 refers to Him as the **Son of Man.** This was Jesus' favorite title for Himself. It comes from Dan 7:13-14 in which the Messiah is called by this name and receives an eternal kingdom. The Son of Man is the one who is the Son and King of Hebrews 1; all things, including His enemies (1:13), will be put under His feet.

In v 8 the author makes it clear that by quoting Psalm 8 he has Jesus in mind. He is not talking about the role men and women have in God's creation now. Man was created to rule over God's creation, **but now we do not yet see all things put under him.** In fact, at this present time, we do not see everything in subjection to mankind in general or even to Jesus Christ Himself. As the author of Hebrews just said in chapter 1, Jesus is waiting until His enemies are placed under His feet.

In v 9 we have no doubt that the author sees Psalm 8 as pointing to Jesus Christ. He refers to Him by name. Even though all things are not subject to Him, **we do see Jesus.** He is the One **who was made a little lower than the angels.**

The One who is the eternal God was made a little lower than the angels He created! But why? It was that He **might taste death for everyone.** As God, He could not die. He became a man in order to experience that. He became a man in order to die.

Christ's death was an expression of the **grace of God**. Christ died for each and every person. Since mankind experiences death, He identified with mankind in His death.

As a result of His death, He was indeed **crowned with glory and honor** (v 9). This is a reference to the fact that after His death and resurrection, He was exalted to the right hand of God (Heb 1:13). In the midst of suffering, Christ was obedient to His Father. As a result, God highly exalted Him. This was very relevant to the original readers of Hebrews. The message of the whole book is that if the readers are obedient in their difficulties, God will exalt them as well.

We can summarize what the use of Psalm 8 here means. There are two themes present: the first is that Christ will have dominion over everything in the future eternal kingdom of God; the second is that Christ became a man. In Christ, man will rule over all of God's creation. Christ is the fulfillment of Psalm 8. In Him, man reaches his destiny. He is not the only One that will inherit this salvation (1:14). Through Him, others will as well.

For all of this to occur, not only did Christ have to become a man, but He also had to die. In the remainder of chapter 2, the author will explain what Christ's death means.

Why Jesus Became a Man (vv 10-18)

¹⁰ For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹ For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹² saying:

***“I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.”***

¹³ And again:

“I will put My trust in Him.”

And again:

“Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.”

¹⁴ Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same,

that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.¹⁶ For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.¹⁷ Therefore, in all things He had to be made *like* His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

In v 10 the author still has Psalm 8 in mind. We see this with the repetition of the words **all things**. Psalm 8 spoke about the glory of mankind ruling over God's creation, all the things God created. This is the salvation that the author of Hebrews is speaking about (v 3).

Of course, Christ, as we have seen, will be the Supreme Ruler of that kingdom. But God is also **bringing many sons to glory**. Many other men and women will share in the glory of ruling with Christ, of having dominion over the works of God's hands. These **sons** are Christ's *partners* (1:9) who will inherit this salvation (1:14). This inheritance is available to all Christians, and even though a believer can never lose eternal life and go to hell, he can neglect and lose his inheritance in God's kingdom (2:3). As the Son, Christ will rule the world to come. But many other **sons** will rule with Him.

In v 9 it was first mentioned that Christ suffered. In v 10 it is said that it was **fitting**, or appropriate, for Him to do so. This is because the suffering of Christ made **the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings**.

Jesus is the Captain of the **many sons**. The word *captain* had a military meaning, and includes within it the idea of a leader who goes before his men—he leads the way. The *captain* is an example for others to follow.

The picture here is that Christ leads others to the **glory** of ruling over God's works. Those He leads are the *many sons*. This is the salvation that He is leading them to.

But before Christ could be such a Captain, He had to be made **perfect for that role**. To put it another way, He had to be qualified to assume that position. What will be said in the following verses is that the *many sons* are faced with suffering and death. If their Captain was going to lead them, He had to experience such things Himself. Only in that way could He lead the way through these difficulties. After experiencing these things, He could lead them when they walked that path.

Christ walked the path to glory by suffering. It was through suffering that Christ was exalted to the right hand of the Father, where He is now waiting to rule (1:13; 2:9). What a message for the believers that first read the Book of Hebrews! They had a Captain who had gone before them. He knows what they are going through. Follow Him to glory! This is the salvation He offers to His children. But this salvation involves suffering.

The Captain and those He is leading will share the glory of the world to come. But they also share suffering. They have things in common. Therefore, the Captain had to become one of them. That is the meaning of v 11.

Both the *Captain*, **He who sanctifies**, and *the many sons*, **those who are sanctified** (the King James is better here) **are all of one**. The point here, as v 14 will say, is that Jesus and *the many sons* have the same origin. They all are human.

The word *sanctified* means *to be made holy in one's position* (i.e., *to be set apart*). In the Book of Hebrews, this word is equivalent to the way many Christians use the word *saved*. Christ is the One who makes His people holy in their position. He has paid the price for the forgiveness of their sins. The author will speak of this in detail in chapter 10. Those who have believed in Jesus for eternal life are sanctified. They have been made holy forever (Heb 10:10, 14). Those who are sanctified now have a Captain who can lead them to another kind of salvation if they will follow Him.

Because Christ shares humanity with His people, **He is not ashamed to call them brethren**. He shares in their human nature, their sufferings, and even their experience of death. He is one of them.

How amazing is it, however, that such a One like this would not be ashamed to be counted one of us? The God of the universe—the eternal Son—calls us His brothers! When we read in chapter 1 about His eternal power and realize that He humbled Himself to become one of us, He entered our world of sin and corruption, He made us holy, and now desires to lead us to eternal glory, how can we not love and follow Him? This is the whole point of the Book of Hebrews.

Because Christ shares all these things with His people, He can speak to them as One who has walked in their shoes. He can tell them how He, as a human being, trusted in God and how God delivered Him.

The author has already said that those whom Christ leads are His brothers. Now in v 12 he quotes from Psalm 22. In that Psalm the Messiah is One who suffers. This involves His death upon the cross (Ps 22:1-21). Beginning in v 22 of the Psalm, however, the Messiah is delivered from His suffering. In the case of Christ, He was resurrected from the dead and exalted to God's right hand. In other words, God delivered Him through His suffering.

Christ gives them this message **in the midst** of them. That is, He is one of them. He is not speaking from heaven with this message. He became one of them, lived among them, and experienced suffering and then deliverance from God.

Here in v 12 the author of Hebrews quotes from the victorious section of Psalm 22 (Ps 22:22). Because God saved (delivered) Him through His sufferings, Christ **will declare Your** (God's) **name to His brethren**. He **will sing praise to** God. Because God delivered Him, He can tell others what God has done for Him. The point is clear. Since God has delivered their Captain through His suffering, God will do the same for the many sons. Like their Captain, they need to continue to trust in God to experience the same kind of deliverance.

In v 13 the author quotes from Isaiah 8 in order to continue this idea of trusting in God. In Isaiah's day, he and the nation of Judah were threatened by their enemies. The king of Judah was tempted to turn to other nations for help. Isaiah says that instead of trusting in others, he will **put his trust in Him** (God). Isaiah would trust in God to deliver him from his enemies. This is the

message that Christ gives to His followers as well; God delivered Jesus from His enemies.

The second part of v 13 has the same message but deals with the word of God. God had told Isaiah that even though the Jews would go into captivity, God would bring His people back. A remnant would return. In addition, He would quickly destroy their enemies. Isaiah names His two **children** with names that reflected what God had promised. One name meant “a remnant will return;” the other meant “hasten booty, speed spoil,” which signified that God would quickly judge the enemies of His people.

Of course, all of this occurred just as God had promised. The prophecy of the names of Isaiah’s children came to pass. The point is that God’s word can be trusted. Jesus trusted in God’s word, and God delivered Him. God promises to deliver His people from their enemies. The children of God can believe the same thing. In the context of Hebrews, we could also say that God will give glory and honor to those children who continue to trust in Him through difficult times.

The author clearly wants to say that Christians are the children of God and of Christ (v 13). These **children** are made up of **flesh and blood** (v 14). To become one of them, Christ **shared in the same**, that is, He took on flesh and blood. As we saw in v 11, Christ and His children are of the same origin in this respect.

We were told in v 9 that the reason Christ took on flesh and blood was to die. But now, in v 14, we are told why He died. It was so that Christ **might destroy him who had the power of death**. This one is then identified as **the devil**.

Christ’s death made the power that Satan had in this area a thing of the past. But what does that mean? It could mean that Satan’s activities brought sin into the world. As a result, death entered into the world. But Christ’s death paid for the sins of His people (the author will say that in v 17). His resurrection conquered death. His people no longer have to fear it.

Another possibility is that Satan often uses the threat of death against the people of God. The original readers of Hebrews, for example, might have been tempted to quit following Christ because they feared what His enemies might do. This could

include killing them. However, Christ's death and resurrection means that believers never need to fear death again.

This is the point of v 15. There is a natural tendency for people, even Christians, to have a **fear of death**. They are in **bondage** to such fear when faced with persecution for their faith. But Christ's defeat of death provides His people with a **release** from that fear.

For some believers the path to the glory of ruling with Christ involves death. We can think of someone like Stephen in Acts 7. If Christ is going to lead such children to glory, He had to take away the fear of death. That is one of the reasons why He became a man and died. When believers are faced with death while following Christ, they can look at His example and see what God did for their Captain.

In vv 16-18 the author concludes his discussion about Christ becoming one with His children. He started this section by saying that angels will not rule the world to come (v 5). He concludes with the same idea here in v 16. Christ did not become a man **to give aid to angels**. Instead, He came to **give aid to the seed of Abraham**. In Gal 3:7, 29, all believers in Christ are called the seed of Abraham. That is also the meaning here. Christ came to help and lead believers to become rulers in the world to come.

In vv 17-18 the author gives a final reason why Christ became a man. He did it so **He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest**. This is a topic that the author will devote much attention to in the latter parts of the book.

It is said that Christ **had** to become **like His brethren** in order to do this. The point is that if Jesus was going to be the kind of High Priest His people needed, He had to become one of them. He had to become like them **in all things**. He had to be born, become tired, experience hunger and thirst, be tempted, and go through suffering and death.

Christ was a **faithful High Priest** in the **things pertaining to God**. This means He made propitiation for **the sins of the people**. He did all that was necessary to secure His people's relationship with God. In our **High Priest** we are holy (v 14), and we can approach God through Him. Since He obeyed His Father perfectly, He is also faithful because He is completely trustworthy.

He is merciful in the sense that He is sympathetic to His people and knows what they are going through. He knows because He became one of them. A high priest represents the people he intercedes for. In the OT the high priest was one of the people. Christ became one of us to fulfill that role.

The author specifically states that the reason Christ can be a **merciful High Priest** is because **He Himself has suffered** and has been **tempted**. The original readers were suffering and were tempted to give up.

The author introduces a very important idea here. Our King is at the right hand of the Father (1:13). He is all-powerful. But He is also our High Priest. When His people approach Him, they do not just find an all-powerful King. They also find One who intercedes for them and who understands everything they are going through.

And since this merciful High Priest is all-powerful, **He is able to aid those who** come to Him. Christ Himself was **tempted** to sin. He was tempted not to be faithful to God in the midst of difficulties. He was tempted to give up. We can think, for example, of His temptation by Satan in the wilderness for forty days. He knows what that is like. Since He overcame and is all-powerful, He can help His children who come to Him for help.

Application

Once again, for many modern day readers of Hebrews, it may be difficult to relate to the original readers since we often do not face persecution or the prospect of dying for our faith. But it is not difficult to see how chapter 2 applies to us.

We must realize that the author of Hebrews is not talking about simply going to heaven. He is talking about how Christ *leads* His children. The death of Christ made eternal life possible through faith in Him alone. But in these verses the author of Hebrews is primarily talking about Christ as our *example*, not our *Savior*.

Christ wants us to follow His path of obedience. He wants to lead us to a share in the glory He will have in His kingdom. Every Christian struggles against those things opposed to God—the world, the flesh, and Satan. Christ wants to bring us to victory over all these things.

Our King has done everything to bring this about. He humbled Himself and became a man. He gave us the example of faithfulness in the midst of suffering. He knows what we go through and will aid us in overcoming whatever is before us. He did all this to save us from our (and His) enemies. Christ is calling us to follow Him.

We simply have to get rid of the idea that Christianity is only about “going to heaven.” Christians are called to not only go there, but to go there *victoriously*—walking in the footsteps of our Captain.

We can expect a great loss if we do not follow in His footsteps. We can expect to be disciplined by Him if we neglect so great a deliverance.

Unlike salvation from eternal condemnation, which occurs at a moment in time when one believes in Jesus Christ for eternal life (John 3:16-18, 36), following Christ’s example involves faithfulness over a lifetime. We will only succeed in this endeavor if we *continue* looking to our Captain. That is how the author starts the next chapter.

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