

Hebrews 2

The writer has spent **chapter 1** making it very clear that God has now spoken to us in ‘the Son’, who is much more significant than any angel. An amazing being, the ‘exact representation’ of God’s nature, intimately involved with the creation of the world, and yet the One who came into the world to make ‘purification of sins’. Both divine and human!

Because of who the Son is, he writes, we need to pay really close attention to the message which he has brought, even closer than to the ‘word spoken through angels’. What does he mean by that? See **Acts 7:30,35,38,53**, **Galatians 3:19**, and **Exodus 3:2**.¹ We could get into a more detailed study of ‘the angel of the LORD’ in the Old Testament, but it’s probably enough to say that he appears to be a manifestation of the presence of God in human form. So, not visibly demonstrating his awesome power and majesty but, nonetheless, God himself. Reminds me of someone!

As we have seen before, the word ‘angel’ in the New Testament simply means ‘messenger’, and that is also true of the word used in the Old Testament. So what the writer seems to be saying is simply this: The Old Covenant was delivered by messengers (whether ‘angelic beings’ or human), whereas the New Covenant has been delivered by the Son himself. And if the Old Covenant carried penalties for disobedience, how vitally important it is for us not to neglect ‘so great a salvation’ (= rescue)! (**v.3a**)

Now he moves on from referring to Jesus as ‘the Son’ and calls him ‘the Lord’. Immediately the scene has shifted from eternal realities to recent events on this earth, where the Lord Jesus first brought the message of rescue himself and passed it on to ‘those who heard’ (i.e. most likely the 12 apostles), who in their turn ‘confirmed to us’ the message. (In case we were in any doubt, this shows that the writer did not witness Jesus’s earthly ministry.) (**v.3b**)

The writer also witnessed the signs and wonders, various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit by which God endorsed the ministry of the apostles (**v.4**). (So that would fit with the writer being Paul, Apollos, Aquila or Priscilla, for example – ‘second generation’ believers – but maybe not Barnabas, as he was in Jerusalem in **Acts 4**, very soon after the resurrection, and so he might have personally witnessed Jesus’s ministry.)

But, he says, angels are not the ones who are the key players in God’s purposes! Mankind may have been made ‘lower’ than angels² in terms of spiritual order (for a little while, anyway), but ultimately our destiny is to be ‘crowned with glory and honour’, ‘appointed over the works of (his) hands’ and to have ‘all things in subjection under (our) feet’ – with nothing left out! (**v.6-8** are direct quotes from **Psalms 8**.)

My mind immediately jumps to **Romans 8:21**, where our future is described: *“the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God”* and the prophecy in **Daniel 7:27**: *“the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; his kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the empires will serve and obey him.”*

BUT . . . We can’t see that yet, as **v.8b** reminds us!

¹ For other references to ‘the angel of the LORD’, see **Genesis 16:7-11, 21:17, 22:11,15, Deuteronomy 33:2** and **Judges 13**.

² **Psalms 8:5** in our Bibles says ‘a little lower than God’, but the word in Hebrew is *elohim*, a plural word sometimes used for God himself and sometimes for ‘gods’ or heavenly beings. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint), the word is *angeloi*, angels or messengers.

What do we see? God's plan and purposes unfolding, designed to bring us to that glorious point. Jesus, for a little while made like us, lower than the angels, totally identified with mankind. And we see him now having made that glorious transition, 'crowned with glory and honour' because he has gone through the suffering of death and come out the other side, experiencing death for the sake of everyone (**v.9**). Reminds me of **1 Corinthians 15:20 & 23** – Jesus as the first fruits.

So the Father, in the process of 'bringing many sons to glory', considered it right to take the Lord Jesus through suffering – right down where we deserved to be – and then bring him up again, **as a human being**, 'perfected'. The word means 'having reached the goal' – very appropriate for the One who is the originator¹ of our salvation! (**v.10**) This seems to me to expand what is written in **Hebrews 1:3b-4**, and those verses from *At the Name of Jesus* are appropriate again!

V.11 re-emphasises how fully the eternal Son ('he who sanctifies') was made 'one of us' ('those who are sanctified') by his human birth, life and death. He and we are 'all from one' and he is not ashamed to consider us to be his siblings!

V.12 is a quotation from **Psalms 22:22**, the same psalm from which Jesus called out on the cross, "my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

V.13 is from **Isaiah 8:17-18**, but again we may find the words are different in our Bibles: 'I will look eagerly for him' or something similar. The Septuagint (Greek) translation says something like 'I will have relied on him', so pretty close to what is quoted here. The NIV translation and one or two others seem to follow the Septuagint by saying 'I will put my trust in him'.²

In **v.14-18**, he continues to explore and expand on the amazing commitment of the eternal Son to become part of the human race, explaining **why** God did it this way . . .

V.14. Because we are flesh and blood and are therefore inevitably certain to die, he (literally) 'took a share' in flesh and blood, in order to put Satan out of action because he (Satan) **had** (past tense) the power (= dominion) of death. Who has that power now? See **Revelation 1:18**!

V.15. . . . and the result is that the fear of death is removed and we are released from the slavery which naturally follows from it. See **Romans 8:15-17** – it's all tied up with our inheritance!

V.16. It isn't angels that God helps (literally, 'takes hold of') but it is 'the descendant of Abraham'. Some translations say 'descendants' (plural), but the Greek is singular – why? See **Isaiah 41:8-10** and **Galatians 3:16**.

V.17. . . . which is another reason why the Son needed to be made like us in every respect, so that he might **become** the sort of high priest we need – compassionate and totally trustworthy – in everything to do with God himself, making the sacrifice to 'make atonement for the sins of the people' i.e. for us. I like 'become'. It happened in his human lifetime!

V.18. If we ever think that perhaps God doesn't understand what we are going through, this verse should help to reassure us, along with **Hebrews 4:15**.

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¹ The same word is used in **Hebrews 12:2**.

² **Isaiah 7 & 8** refer to 'Immanuel' and **ch.9** has 'the people who walk in darkness will see a great light . . .', quoted in **Matthew 4:16** and by Zacharias in **Luke 1:79**. Messianic connections!