

HEBREWS 1--2

THE SON IS THE FINAL REVELATION OF GOD

- I. The Son is the full Revelation while the Old Testament revelation was only to frail men through angels who could not fulfill what they revealed (1:1-2:18).

The superior revelation from God is through the Son as opposed to angels (the messengers of God's revelation in the Old Testament; cf. 2:1 for his statement that the angels here represent the revelation of the Old Testament). In essence in this portion the author will point out that this revelation is the fullness of all that the Old Testament looked forward to since this revelation was in a Person, not simply words, but an active Participant, that of the perfect image of God, Himself, Jesus Christ. This revelation was not just words but in a Person who was able to bring about the redemption of Israel so that they could be the mediators God had appointed.

- A. Christ was the ultimate speaker and actor for God (1:1-14).

The author first deals with a contrast between the person of the Son against the person of angels. Angels were messengers of the Word of God, while the Son was the revelation Himself who appeared in the flesh to represent God. Note that the Son is the only qualified full representative of the Father's attributes.

1. God has spoken through Son in these last days (1:1-2a).

His first listing is of the Old Testament revelation which was to fathers and prophets, all of whom were appointed to the task and who received it in various ways such as dreams (Joseph, Jacob), angels (Abraham, Lot), as well as directly (Moses). Yet this full revelation of God is in a person, that is, Son.³

The antagonist would have argued for a final revelation in the O.T.

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son,

2. Son is the Heir, Creator, Radiance of His Glory, Representor, and Upholder (1:2b-3a).

After introducing Son revelation, He points out that the Son is the heir of all things, meaning that the Son has all that the Father has (the Father has given Him everything). The radiance of his Glory and representation is to point out that to see Jesus (the Son) is to see the Father. In addition, all

³ Note that there is no article prior to the noun, Son, thus "in Son." The point is that this is not spoken, nor passed on, but Son revelation.

the power of the Father is granted to the Son to accomplish all things on behalf of the Father.

The antagonists would have been arguing that access to the Father can be made apart from the Son through the ministry of angels in the revelation of the O.T. But the author argues that the Father could only be seen and related to on a partial revelation, and that He could not be known fully except through the Son who reveals in a human being all that the Father is. Thus the O.T. believer could not know the Father fully, apart from the full revelation of the Son.

whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. ³ And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.

3. The Ultimate Revealer, The Son, was able to fulfill His revelation to Israel by making purification of sins, and sitting down at the right hand of God, something O.T. revelation anticipated (1:3b-4a).

This Son, the exact representation of the Father, is not simply a word of revelation, but this Revealer is the Actor (the Provider of the Revelation) for God, that is, He does not prescribe the forgiveness of sins through a partial, symbolic sacrifice, but through Himself as the ultimate sacrifice. However, he is pointing out the function of the Son as the High Priest who completes the Work of redemption through His own sacrifice. The reference here is to Psalm 110:1 which predicts the period of time (a period of persecution) between the crucifixion and the Second Coming.⁴

⁴ Psalm 110:1: "The LORD (*YHWH*) says to my Lord (*Adonai*, "my Ruler"): "Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet."

David, during his Old Testament times, envisions a conversation between the YHWH (the Father here) and the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son, the Ruler, Jesus Christ (cf. Psalm 2 for detailed definitions of the use of the Titles as used here) prior to His coming to earth, a discussion taking place in the heavenlies. The Father speaks about this future time when He says the following:

"Sit": Sitting in the Old Testament, particularly the priesthood, was the sign of a completed work. One did not sit until he was finished his assignment. Thus there were no seats in the tabernacle, for the priest was never done sacrificing, showing that his work as priest was never done, that sins were never fully taken away under his priesthood. Thus the Father is instructing the Son to "sit", thus indicating a time when the Son's work has been completed. This of course is thus indicating a time when the Son is in heaven, having completed His work of redemption on the cross. Notice that the "sit" precedes the rule ("until I make thine enemies a footstool for thy feet") thus indicating His action as High Priest (v. 4).

Angels do not have the privilege of being uniquely positioned to represent the Father fully.

When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; 4 having become as much better than the angels,

4. The Psalmist (Ps. 2) prophesied a time when the Son would be the Anointed Ruler over Israel, not angels (1:4b-5).

as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. 5 For to which of the angels did He ever say, "THOU ART MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE"? And again, "I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME"?

5. Son is worshipped as God, angels are ministers for God who worship the Son (1:6-7).

6 And when He again brings the first-born into the world, He says, "AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM."⁵ 7 And of the angels He says, "WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS, AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE."

6. Son is anointed because of righteousness (1:8-9).

This quotation from Psalm 45, the Song of the King's marriage, indicates the King (the Anointed One of God) as being enthroned because He represents God. Of course, the point is that this never occurred in the Old Testament and certainly not with angels. The point is reinforced that this Psalm anticipated the ultimate Son, Jesus Christ as the King.

“At My right hand”: The right hand of the Father is the place where the Representative sat awaiting orders from the Father as to when and where He would again rise up to operate as the Anointed One. Thus there is a time where the Son will be in heaven after completing His work, sitting in the place of honor, awaiting a time when He will return to operate again for the Father.

“Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.”: Notice that this period of time when the Son sits at the right hand of the Father is not a time of peace on earth, for the enemies are still ruling. Thus this shows that the cross will take place, but the victory will be delayed while the Son sits at the right hand of the Father, and then the Son will return to act on behalf of the Father to place the enemies into submission to the Son (cf. Psalm 2).

⁵ Psalm 97:7 (אֱלֹהִים, LXX: ἄγγελοι) or Psalm 148:1 (בְּלִאֲכֹפֵי, LXX: ἄγγελοι)

The questioner of this book is worried that Jesus' absence is indicative of His lost power. Yet this, combined with Psalm 110 (the Son at the Right Hand of the Father) indicates that the Son is enthroned through obedience (to the death on the cross).

8 But of the Son He says, "THY THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM. 9 "THOU HAST LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, THY GOD, HATH ANOINTED THEE WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE THY COMPANIONS."

7. The Kingdom of God in the Son will continue forever (1:10-12).

It is frequently assumed that the point of this verse is that the Son will continue forever, assuming the beginning "Lord" is a title for the Son. However, in the Old Testament passage, the reference is likely to the Father. He has just pointed out in the preceding verses that the Son is the King of Israel, the ultimate One. Now he uses verses that speak regarding the continuance of the Kingdom of God on earth forever. Thus, this ultimate Son, the King, the Representative of God will rule over a kingdom that continues forever.

10 And, "THOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING DIDST LAY THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF THY HANDS; 11 THEY WILL PERISH, BUT THOU REMAINEST; AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD AS A GARMENT, 12 AND AS A MANTLE THOU WILT ROLL THEM UP; AS A GARMENT THEY WILL ALSO BE CHANGED. BUT THOU ART THE SAME, AND THY YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END. "

8. The Son will subject all things to himself, unlike angels who are ministers of God (1:13-14).

Continuing with Psalm 110:1 the author points out that the Son alone, the King, who they suspect has lost His power, is now sitting at the Right Hand of the Father. Angels, on the other hand, are messengers, whose main function is to provide liaison between God and man to implement His desires toward man.⁶

⁶ The point of the author here is that angels, while bringing the revelation in the Old Testament, have ceased that service, and now, in light of the full revelation of the Son, are aiding those who must persevere on behalf of the representation of the Son during this period of enemy warfare. Thus, they are ministering to the Hebrew Christians who are under persecution. He will mention angels again in 13:2 referring to some O.T. appearances of angels to aid believers

13 But to which of the angels has He ever said, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE THINE ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR THY FEET"? 14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

- B. Warning: The need to pay attention to the new revelation through Son (2:1-4).
1. The reader must pay attention to, or drift away from the revelation of Son (2:1).

In the first of his harbor illustrations the author pictures a ship, unanchored, that drifts away from its proper place in the harbor. He will use this same illustration in 6:19. This constitutes the author's first warning passage. Here is the mildest of the warnings, though still severe. He pictures here one who is ignorant of his need to continue attachment to the true anchor, and drifts into the rough seas of apostasy, perhaps over a period of time, and of ignorance of a situation that, while serious, is perceived as being unimportant, due to the lack of perception of what is real.

2:1 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away⁷ from it.

2. Comparison to the old covenant revealed through angels: How much severer the punishment for ignoring the Son's revelation (2:2-4).
 - a. Ignorance of the old revelation was met with grave consequences (2:2).

In the Law, every infraction came with a just punishment. However, the Law was only a picture, a partial of what was to come.

(perhaps Abraham in Gen. 18). (Note that Heb. 13:2 does not say that this occurrence will happen today, only that it did happen in the O.T., as a lesson to show hospitality to strangers.)

⁷ This harbor illustration may give a hint to where the author was when the letter was penned. This illustration is picked up again in 7:19 where he speaks of the anchor. Several cities were known for their harbors, and in that day, when cities were much smaller and the harbor was visible from most of the city, a place like Corinth would come to mind. In addition the "Olympic games" motif of 12:1 might also be a hint to the City of Corinth, although Rome was also known for its games, although it was lacking a notable harbor.

2 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense,

b. Thus, ignorance of the new revelation will be much more serious which has been attested to the author by the apostles (2:3-4).

1) The new revelation is more serious (2:3a).

The difference between the full revelation in Christ and the Law is overwhelmingly greater. Thus, if one desires to escape the wrath of God (i.e., “deliverance”) he should not neglect, or be casually ignorant of God’s plan of deliverance, that of the Son. His point is that the reader will not escape the judgment (wrath) of God if He ignores, or treats lightly, the Son, the very means of deliverance.

The use of the term “salvation” here as the translation is somewhat misleading, since the church age believer tends to relate all uses of this term as related to his positional escape. However, recall that the reader here is under persecution and is confusing it with the wrath of God. Thus he perceives that his rejection of the Nation of Israel has brought him the wrath of God. Thus, he desires to escape this persecution (or what he perceives to be the wrath of God). The author’s point is how does the reader expect to escape the wrath of God if he neglects THE VERY SON OF GOD. This is not, eternal wrath, but the temporary curse of God prescribed in Deut. 28 on disobedience. The point is that if a believer desires to fulfill God’s will (be delivered) he must acknowledge God’s means of escape (the Son). Otherwise he will not be delivered (be in God’s will) and will incur the curses of God (the wrath, which is not walking with God).

3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

2) It has been spoken to the author by the Lord (2:3b).

This time the author shows the implementation of the revelation in the Son, now identified with the title, “Lord”, likely a use of the O.T. “YHWH”, but it could be the O.T. “Adonai” (Ruler).

After it was at the first spoken through the Lord,

- 3) It was confirmed by those who heard (the apostles) (2:3c).

The process came from Jesus to the disciples (apostles), the authorized agents who took the words and works of Jesus and showed them to be the fullness of the O.T. prophecies and types.

it was confirmed to us by those who heard,

- 4) It was attested to them (the apostles) by miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit by God according to His will (2:4).

The author now points out the validation process by God. They did signs and wonders to accompany the word as the Spirit guided them in the teaching and in validation⁸. The point is that God has clearly validated His message through the Son and thus one would do well to pay attention to this validation of God Himself.

4 God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

- C. The necessity of God making the Son lower than angels is that He had to become a man so as to substitute in death for them (2:5-18).

1. The Son is the One whom God has chosen to be the fulfiller of Genesis 1:28 (Psalm 8) to subject all things under His feet, not angels (2:5-8a).

While still considering angels as the O.T. messengers of God, the author transitions into the necessity for the Son to come to earth and become a man, something angels did not do. This, of course, is for the purpose of fulfilling God's injunction of Genesis 1:26,28, that man would rule. Yet in man's failure, God sent the Son so as to bring men (many sons) to glory through the substitution of the Son. Thus, Genesis 1:26,28 is fulfilled in Christ. The quotation here is from Psalm 8, where the Psalmist comments on the greatness of God's creative order that has awarded man rule over God's creation on His behalf.

5 For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking. 6 But one has testified somewhere, saying, "WHAT IS MAN, THAT THOU REMEMBEREST HIM? OR

⁸ The only visibility now was the attesting miracles by the invisible God (Holy Spirit).

THE SON OF MAN, THAT THOU ART CONCERNED ABOUT HIM? 7 "THOU HAST MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS⁹; THOU HAST CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR, AND HAST APPOINTED HIM OVER THE WORKS OF THY HANDS;⁸ THOU HAST PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET.

2. But Christ has not been seen in that role of physical conqueror yet, but has been made the One who became the obedient Man (2:8b-18).
 - a. He presently does not have all things subject to him (2:8b).

The author introduces an observation. While man had all things subject to him (creation), yet it is obvious that all things have not yet become subject. This is especially notable in that all the enemies of God have not become subject to Israel, nor is the curse of the ground removed. Thus, the fullness of subjection has not come. This will be part of his argument against returning to Israel, since the subjection of enemies clearly has not taken place, thus man must hope in the revelation of God, which tells man to hope in Christ who is in the process of subjecting all things to Himself.

"For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.

⁹ Psalm 8 literally reads, "You have caused him to lack little from (in comparison to) , God, gods or angels, (Hebrew: *Elohim*, LXX: *angelos*). In a study of Psalm 8, this should likely be translated angels (little representatives of God) since the author is comparing man to God in a massive way, it would be unnatural for him to say now that man is much like God. However, by contrast he is saying that man is representative of God much like the angels and lacks little from them. He will go on to say that actually they have some greater privileges than angels since they are rulers (in some sense on their own domain). This, the argument of Hebrews, is that man, varies little from the honor of angels, yet has been placed over the earth as a domain in a special position on behalf of God, different than the angels in the purpose of God. Many suggest that this is translated "the gods" or the heavenly court (cf. Sabourin, p. 177) which would involve a near-eastern sense of heaven. However, even in that case, the heavenly court is seen as angels, or God's attendants. That it should be translated "God" is probably difficult, especially in the sense that YHWH is used here as the covenant keeping God of Israel. Thus the use of "Elohim" as God would not be a normal inference, and could open the door for other uses. Note also that the LXX translates the word as *αγγελος* (angels) and it is quoted in that manner in Hebrews 2.

- b. He is seen as One who has become a man so that He might taste death for all (2:9).

Jesus had been seen, and testified to, by the apostles as to His validity from God. First Jesus now being honored (Psalm 110 again) had to come to earth to suffer and die so that men would not have to (be eternally dead due to the curse). Thus men were under the curse and thus could not remove it. Jesus then took the judgment of the curse on every man, and man can thus rule in Jesus (realized in the Kingdom at the return of Christ.).

9 But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

- c. He has brought many sons to glory, being made perfect and has made all the sanctified ones to be brothers of Himself, and thus sons of God. Because of that fleshly brotherhood, He delivers them (2:10-14a).

Jesus who is over all on behalf of the Father suffered in order to bring deliverance to men. This again is a strong hint to the readers that Jesus Himself had to suffer in order to accomplish His goal. The readers also need to suffer to imitate the Author of their deliverance. Note again here that deliverance, while clearly indicating positional, is also sanctificational. **Their deliverance is that even while suffering, they are delivered since they are in the will of God.** Their hypothesis was that they are not delivered (they are thus under wrath) since they are suffering. The author's hypothesis is that suffering does not indicate wrath, and may very well be in the will of God if one is obedient to the Word.

Jesus is the clear substitute for men and thus makes them brothers¹⁰. It is important to note that this paragraph is where the reader will find the author's definition of the term "brothers" as used throughout the book. It is not a term for Jewish (and possibly unsaved) brothers, but is an identification term that they have partaken as a family in Jesus Christ.

It is important to ensure that the reader does not lose the general context of the argument here. The author's point is to explain why Jesus had to suffer and die and why the King is not present if in fact, as Christians claim, He was victorious and worthy of

¹⁰ Note that this is the place that "brothers" is defined for 3:1ff.

separating oneself from Israel at great cost. The application of the author is clear. The fact that one is suffering obediently is not to be taken as failure, but obedience, with reward delayed.

10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. 11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12 saying, "I WILL PROCLAIM THY NAME TO MY BRETHREN, IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING THY PRAISE." 13 And again, "I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN HIM."¹¹ And again, "BEHOLD, I AND THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME."¹² 14 Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same

- d. He delivers from the devil (2:14b).

The author now moves to a greater level of the battle. It is not simply a death, but a death that gives God the victory over the devil of Genesis 3, the one who holds the rule of man, the ultimate enemy whom they are fighting.

¹¹ This quotation is from Psalm 22:22 as Messianic Psalm where David envisions himself as the type of the Messiah who suffers at the hands of his enemies only to be able to proclaim God's deliverance after deliverance. Thus Christ now having suffered death, is able to proclaim God's deliverance to the brethren.

¹² This quotation from Isaiah 8:17-18 has provided some difficulties and has been a source for claimants of a different (non-literal use of the O.T. in the N.T.) hermeneutic by the author. However, if one notes the continuation of the verse in 8:18 Isaiah himself declares that the sons are *signs* for Israel. So how are they signs? In short the nation is being besieged by Syria and Samaria and Ahaz is told to trust in God. He is offered a sign, but refuses, thus God gives the sign of a virgin birth which will indicate the removal of Ahaz' line (a virgin birth would eliminate the involvement of Ahaz' seed). In Isaiah 7:15 Isaiah continues with a prophecy of his first son and then the prophecy of the second son continues later. The point is that Israel must wait for God's deliverance/judgment in a temporal sense, but ultimately must wait for His deliverance in the One born of a virgin, who would be the ultimate Deliverer of Israel. The prophecy continues into Isaiah 9 where the prophecy of the child born to us who will be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace. So, the sons are signs to Israel that ultimately the virgin will bear a Son and He will conquer the Gentiles for God. This Servant/King will be the One described in this Hebrews passage as the One who substitutes Himself for the "children". He will perform this substitution in Isaiah 53. So the children are Isaiah's children who will wait (trust in God) for the deliverance for which they are signs.

that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death,¹³ that is, the devil;

- e. He delivers from the fear of the death (2:15).

The slavery of death here is the inability to escape from the sentence of death that kept man from being a son. This was especially seen in the Law where man was under the attempt to prove himself righteous and could not. Thus, he was unable to escape the sentence of death and only reconfirmed that he was worthy of it. Through the substitution of Christ, man was free from that death sentence.

15 and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

- f. He delivers thus those from Abraham, under the promise, i.e., Israel, not those who are not under that promise, i.e., angels (2:16).

Again, the author inserts the issue of angels. Before he showed how the Son was superior to the angels in function, and now he shows that angels are not even the receivers of the benefit of the redemption, but only man. Again, what this shows is that angels are only functioning on behalf of God, and it is the Son and man who are important in the plan of God. Thus the O.T. was only a partial indication of what would happen in the fullness of times. Thus it is the Israelite who is the fullness of the receiver of the sacrifice. The author's point is that it is the nation who was to receive the benefit of redemption. Since Israel has rejected it, they have no help, but the author encourages the Christian Jew to be convinced of it and continue on in that understanding.

Note clearly here: It is Israel who is to become a Son through the sacrifice of the Son, Jesus. This is the author's big premise, that Israel cannot be Sons (Mediators) until they take the benefit that Christ as Son offers.

16 For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.

¹³ The power of death here is that Satan held that from the beginning. When he deceived Adam, God brought death on Adam as a judgment. Now, Satan kills through deceit about Christ, and then he actually kills believers through his agents, the Gentiles and disobedient Israel. Thus, man must face death and without Christ cannot overcome it.

- g. Therefore, He had to be made like a man, so He could fulfill His role as High Priest in offering for sins, and for aiding the tempted¹⁴ (2:17-18).

The author's conclusion to this section is that by being a human being, God in Christ was able to sample the suffering of endurance for the sake of the Word of God. Since thus He was both a man and God He qualified as a full High Priest who was able to plead their case before the Father. The point here is made in the term "propitiation". This sacrifice was to appease the wrath of God. The point is that they have the wrath of God appeased through the Son's Priesthood, and thus are delivered even though they are suffering. Since Christ was the Son of God and suffered they can see that righteous suffering is required, and involves one in the will of God, and since they have a High Priest who has appeased, and does appease, the wrath of God, they can be assured they are in the will of God, though persecuted by the so-called nation of God, Israel.

The nation will not be the priest (Exod. 19:5-6) until they are enabled by their High Priest (Jesus).

17 Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

¹⁴ The 'temptation' here is not just general temptations as cheating, lying, or sexual tests. It is the temptation to avoid obedient suffering when it is the clear purpose of God. In the temptation on the Mount Jesus was offered the temptation to avoid suffering, yet obediently took the pain in obedience to the Father.