

### 03. Hebrews Part One: 1:5 – 2:18



## Part One: The name so different from the angels

1. The Son of God 1:5-14

2. An appeal 2:1-4

3. Our brother 2:5-18

Hebrews 1:5

For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are **my Son**; today I have begotten you?’ (Psalm 2:7) Or again, ‘I will be his **Father**, and he will be **my Son**?’ (2Samuel 7:14)

Ephesians 1:21

‘The risen Christ is far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come’.

1 Peter 3:22

‘He has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.’

For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you’? (Psalm 2:7) Or again, ‘I will be his Father, and he will be my Son’? (2Samuel 7:14)

We find Psalm 2:7 applied to Jesus throughout the New Testament. In the gospels this psalm is alluded to in the scene of Jesus’ baptism: ‘You are my Son’ (Mark 1:11), and also in his transfiguration: ‘This is my Son’ (Mark 9:7).

Luke quotes it also in relation to the exaltation of Jesus: ‘We bring you the good news that what God promised to our ancestors he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you’ (Acts 13:32-33).

‘I will be his Father, and he will be **my Son**’? (2Samuel 7:14)

This text is applied in the New Testament to Jesus’ disciples, who share Jesus’ life of intimate communion with God:

‘I will be your father, and **you shall be my sons**, says the Lord Almighty’ (2 Corinthians 6:18).

‘Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and **they will be my sons**’ (Revelation 21:7).

## Hebrews 1:6

And again, when he brings the **firstborn** into the world, he says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship him’ (Deuteronomy 32:43).

We find the title ‘firstborn’ in another royal Messianic psalm: ‘I will make him the **firstborn**, the highest of the kings of the earth’ (Psalm 89:27).

It is a title found elsewhere in the New Testament: ‘He is the image of the invisible God, the **firstborn** of all creation’ (Colossians 1:15). ‘Those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the **firstborn** within a large family’ (Romans 8:29). The Book of Revelation speaks of Jesus as: ‘the **firstborn** ... who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood’ (Revelation 1:5).

## Hebrews 1:7-9

Of the angels he says, 'He makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire' (Psalm 104:4).

But of the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous sceptre is the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions' (Psalm 45:6-7)

The role of the angels is to obey. The one who commands is the royal Son, the one whom God brought into heaven and who 'sat at the right hand of the Majesty on high' (Hebrews 1:3).

'Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever' (2Samuel 7:16).

## Hebrews 1:10-12

And, 'In the beginning, **Lord**, you founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like clothing; like a cloak you will roll them up, and like clothing they will be changed. But you are the same, and **your years will never end**' (Psalm 102:25-27)

When the Hebrew scriptures speak of '**the Lord**' they are speaking of God who appeared to Moses in the burning bush and who sent Moses to liberate the people from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 3:13-15). It is this mysterious and divine aspect that is being highlighted here by our author. To have God's name is to exercise God's power to save (see Exodus 23:20-21). The exalted Jesus is **Lord** for he is identified with God's redemptive action in history. He is the one who makes possible real and final 'salvation' (Hebrews 1:14; see also 2:3; 7:14; 13:20; 12:14).

## Hebrews 1:13

But to which of the angels has he ever said, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’ (Psalm 110:1)?

Like each of the texts so far, this seventh and final text, is frequently applied to Jesus throughout the New Testament. Mark uses it to invite his readers to see that there is more to Jesus the Messiah than his being the son of David (see Mark 12:35-37). Mark alludes to it again in the context of the coming of the exalted Christ as judge ‘seated at the right hand of the Power’ (Mark 14:62). The writers of the New Testament frequently draw on this text when they wish to focus on the exaltation of Christ (see Acts 2:34; 1Corinthians 15:25; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; 1Peter 3:22).



## Hebrews 1:14

Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit **salvation**?

Having demonstrated from scripture that it was always God's intention that the royal Messiah, his beloved Son, would be superior to the angels, our author reminds his audience that in God's provident care the angels exist for their sake, to be instruments of God's grace bringing them to enjoy the inheritance won for them by the Son, the inheritance defined here as '**salvation**'.

This is the key that enables him to turn and directly challenge his audience to take up the implications of what he has just said by renewing their commitment to Christ.

## Hebrews 2:1-3 - An appeal to the congregation

Therefore we must **pay greater attention** to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word [λόγος] **declared through angels** (The Torah, see Galatians 3:19; Acts 7:30, 38, 53) was valid, and every transgression or disobedience received a just penalty, how can we escape if we neglect so great a **salvation**?

The verb translated here as ‘**pay attention**’ (Greek: προσέχειν) was used of the care taken by sailors to hold a ship on course for the port by skilful use of the anchor. This reinforces the insistence that we not grow careless and ‘**drift away**’ from ‘**what we have heard**’. The word translated ‘**declare**’ (here and in verse 3) is once again the Greek λαλεω (see 1:1-2). We are still in the context of the spoken word. If we cling to Jesus and listen for what God is saying to us through him, we are like a ship securely anchored. In spite of contrary tides and unfavourable winds, we will reach the port to which grace is attracting us. If we fail to remain attentive we will find ourselves drifting away from Jesus.

The Torah speaks not only of the wonderful ways in which God blesses us, but also of what will happen to us if we reject his covenant and fail to follow the way to the salvation which God promises. If this is true of the Torah, incomplete and imperfect as is its revelation, what must be the effect on us if we fail to attend to the fullness of divine revelation that God gives us through his Son? Through Jesus, God offers us ‘**so great a salvation**’. Do we really want to let it go and leave ourselves at the mercy of the open sea and the destruction that will certainly follow?

‘We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming’ (Ephesians 4:14).



In speaking of ‘salvation’ our author is not claiming to experience it now in its fullness. Later he will declare: ‘Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him’ (9:28). However, it is possible now to taste it (6:5).

We can have our sin forgiven now. We are invited now to ‘approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need’ (4:16).

We can experience now real communion with God and enjoy a covenant relationship, assured of God’s commitment to us (see 8:7-12; 10:15-18).

We can begin now to enjoy the ‘rest’ for which we long (4:3).

## Hebrews 2:3-4 - An appeal to the congregation

Salvation was declared at first through the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him while God added his testimony by signs and wonders and various deeds of power (δυνάμις), and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to his will.

Addressing the crowd at the first Pentecost, Peter speaks of 'Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you' (Acts 2:22).

Paul speaks of ‘what Christ has accomplished through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God’ (Romans 15:18-19).

‘The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, signs and wonders and mighty works’ (2 Corinthians 12:12).

‘Our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power (δυνάμις) and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction’ (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

## Hebrews 2:5-18 - our brother

### Hebrews 2:5-9

Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. (Present world: Deuteronomy 32:8). But someone has testified somewhere, 'What are we, mortal human beings, that you are mindful of us, that you care for us? You have made us for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned us with glory and honour, subjecting all things under our feet' (Psalm 8:5-7).

Now in subjecting all things to us, God left nothing outside our control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to us, but we do see **Jesus**, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour (see 1:5-13), because of the suffering of death so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.



## Hebrews 2:9

We see **Jesus** now crowned with glory and honour, because of the suffering of death so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

How can one speak of ‘**glory and honour**’ in relation to one who was crucified? The crucified Christ is, indeed, as Paul says: ‘a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles’ (1 Corinthians 1:23). We are here at the very heart of the gospel and the significance of Jesus’ suffering will occupy our author throughout the rest of this work. He engages the problem head on as he claims that the man Jesus is ‘**crowned with glory and honour**’ precisely ‘**because of the suffering of death**’. We are going to have to understand this carefully – and our author will take great pains to help us do precisely that – but we must know that Jesus’ dying as he did has a profound meaning. It is ‘**by the grace of God**’ and it is that ‘**he might taste death for everyone.**’

As our author will go on to demonstrate, this is partly because, through the way in which he faced death, he gave us an example to follow: ‘Look to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart’ (Hebrews 12:2-3).

Jesus does give us an example, but it is not enough to imitate him, as it were, from the outside. Jesus therefore gave us his own Spirit to enable us to live the way he lived. He gave us access to the life that comes from God. It is this life of intimate love-communion with our ‘brother’ that enables us to transcend death.

## Hebrews 2:10

It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing a multitude of children to glory, should make **perfect** [τελειόω - priestly consecration, Leviticus 21:10] **the champion** [ἀρχηγός] **of their salvation through sufferings.**

‘He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself’ (Philippians 3:21).

‘When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory’ (Colossians 3:24).

Our sharing in his glory depends on our willingness to bear suffering as he bore it: ‘We suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him’ (Romans 8:17).

Peter has the same message: ‘Rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ’s sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed’ (1Peter 4:13).

‘After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you’ (1 Peter 5:10).

Our author, as we will see, is not claiming that God wills the suffering which we undergo. Much of it is the result of human failure to do precisely what our author is encouraging his listeners to do (**‘pay attention to what we have heard’**). Much human suffering - and the crucifying of Jesus is a clear example – is perpetrated by human sin.

However, there is a direct connection between the glory promised us and the way in which we deal with suffering. Our author will have much to say on this subject: **‘Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him’** (Hebrews 5:8-9).

That wisdom comes through suffering is a theme found in classical Greek drama:

‘Zeus who leads mortals on the way of understanding;  
Zeus, who has established as a fixed ordinance that  
wisdom comes by suffering [pathei mathos]’ (Aeschylus Agamemnon, 177).

‘Justice inclines her scales so that wisdom comes at the price of  
suffering [pathousin mathein]’ (Aeschylus Agamemnon, 250).

‘I am taught by suffering to endure’ (Sophocles Oedipus at Colonus, 6).

## Hebrews 2:11-12

For the one who sanctifies [ἀγιάζω, priestly action; see Exodus 28:4; Leviticus 8:12; 1Samuel 16:5)] and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, saying, ‘I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you’ (Psalm 22:22).

It is ‘in the midst of the congregation’ that we experience the salvation which our brother Jesus gained for us (12:23; also 10:25; 13:15).

## Hebrews 2:13

And again, 'I will put my trust in him' (Isaiah 8:17).

Again, 'Here am I and the children whom God has given me' (Isaiah 8:18)

The plea for trust will recur throughout the oration (see 2:17; 3:13,19; 4:2; 11)



## Hebrews 2:14

Since, therefore, the children share **blood and flesh**, he himself likewise shared the same things so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.

Jesus is described as sharing our 'blood', for he shares the sufferings of the human condition. He shares our 'flesh', for he shares our human vulnerability, weakness and mortality. However, he is our 'champion' (2:10). He faced death and conquered it for us.

The Hellenistic Jewish interpretation of the Genesis story: 'God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of his own eternity, but through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his company experience it' (Wisdom 2:23-24).

## Hebrews 2:15-17

and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect [Romans 8:3; Philippians 2:7]

Jesus our brother has conquered the dark forces that perpetrate evil in our world and redeemed us from our slavery.

As Paul says; he ‘abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel’ (2 Timothy 1:10).

John has the same message: ‘Now the ruler of this world will be driven out’ (John 12:31). ‘The ruler of this world has been condemned’ (John 16:11; see Revelation 12:7-10). Jesus is the ‘stronger’ (Luke 11:22).

Just as God took ‘the offspring of Abraham’ (Isaiah 41:8) ‘by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt’ (Jeremiah 31:32), so, through Jesus our brother, God has taken us. It was essential, therefore, that he ‘become like his brothers and sisters in every respect’.

As Paul says: ‘He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness’ (Philippians 2:7); and, in a daring phrase: ‘God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh’ (Romans 8:3).

# Hebrews 2:17-18

Part Two B



Part Two A



so that he might be a merciful and trustworthy high priest

in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.



- Cultic language because the author is interested in our prayer, our communion with God, our opening our hearts to receive God's gift and our responding in love to God.