

## Spoken with Blood: Christ is Greater Than the Angels

October 2, 2016

Hebrews 1:3b-2:4

After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

5 For to which of the angels did God ever say,

"You are my Son, today I have begotten you"?

Or again,

"I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"?

6 And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,

"Let all God's angels worship him."

7 Of the angels he says,

"He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire."

8 But of the Son he says,

"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."

10 And,

"You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; 11 they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, 12 like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end."

13 And to which of the angels has he ever said,

"Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?

**14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?**

**1 Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. 2 For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, 4 while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.**

The following is an excellent Biblical presentation of what the Bible teaches about angels - <https://bible.org/article/angels-god's-ministering-spirits>

The following is helpful commentary on Hebrews 1:3b-2:4:

***1:5-14 The Son's superiority to the angels***

The scriptural texts cited in this section have the effect of reinforcing and expounding some of the important themes already raised in the introduction (1-4). In particular, reference to the heavenly enthronement of the Son (3) quite naturally leads to an explanation of his position with regard to the angel world. Ps. 110:1 provides the framework in which these various OT texts are to be understood. It is alluded to in v 3 (he 'sat down at the right hand' of the Majesty in heaven) and is quoted in full in v 13. Thus, the subject of Christ's enthronement and heavenly rule is the focus of this section. Jesus used Ps. 110:1 to point to the exalted, heavenly status of the Messiah or Christ in OT expectation (*e.g.* Mk. 12:35-37; 14:61-62), and it was then regularly employed by the earliest Christians to make such claims about the resurrected Jesus (*e.g.* 10:12-14; Acts 2:34-36; 1 Cor. 15:25). There are further allusions to this key text in 8:1 and 12:2.

5 Ps. 2:7 is quoted because it is a prophecy applicable to the Messiah as Son of David and Son of God. The theological basis of this extraordinary claim is God's special promise to David and his dynasty in 2 Sa. 7:14, which is also quoted. When the sons of David were enthroned as God's earthly representatives in Jerusalem, they enjoyed a special relationship of sonship with God. Jesus is the one who ultimately fulfils these scriptures because he is the eternal Son of God (as in 1:2-3), whose resurrection and ascension restored him to the place of all authority and power in the universe, at the Father's 'right hand' (*cf.* the use of Ps. 2:7 in Acts 13:33).

6 No such promises were ever made to the angels. Their task has always been to

worship God (cf. Dt. 32:43; Ps. 96:7). Consequently, they must worship the Son who sits at his right hand. Sharing fully in our humanity, he became for a little while 'lower than the angels', but is now 'crowned with glory and honour' (2:9). The introduction of God's firstborn *into the world* (Gk. *oikoumer*, as in 2:5) is best taken in the context as a reference to Christ's entrance into what for us is still 'the world to come' (2:5). This happened when he ascended to the 'heavenly' realm.

**7-9** The Greek text of Ps. 104:4 suggests that the angels were created to carry out God's commands with the swiftness of *winds* and the strength of *fire*. They are part of the created order and must be subservient to the Son, for he shares with the Father in the divine rule (*throne*) that *will last for ever and ever*. Ps. 45:6-7, which celebrates a royal wedding, is used with reference to Christ, the king of Israel, who supremely fulfils the ideal of sharing in the *righteousness* and *joy* of God's eternal *kingdom*.

**10-12** The eternity of Christ and his rule is again stressed in Ps. 102:25-27. This is contrasted with the perishable creation which he founded and will one day roll up *like a robe*. Hebrews takes the Greek text of both these psalms to mean that the Father addresses his Son as *God* and *Lord*. Ps. 110:1 may have inspired this interpretation, since the Lord there addresses someone else as 'my Lord' and invites him to sit at his right hand.

**13-14** Returning to the text which appears to have been the starting point for his reflections, the writer uses Ps. 110:1 to insist that the angels do not exercise the authority and rule of the Son. As *ministering spirits*, they are meant to serve his purposes and execute his commands. Indeed, they serve God by serving *those who will inherit salvation*. Angels are higher than we are in the order of creation (Ps. 8:4-6), but they are commissioned to help us in ways beyond our understanding, so that we may reach our heavenly inheritance (cf. 13:2).

### **2:1-4 A call to hold fast to the Son and his message**

This paragraph draws out directly the practical consequences of the previous chapter. It is the first of several warning passages, revealing the writer's concern about the situation of at least some of his readers. Positively, the encouragement is to *pay more careful attention ... to what we have heard* (1). Negatively, the warning is not to *drift away*, like people in a boat that has lost its moorings and is moving rapidly towards a waterfall. How people drift from Christ remains to be explored in later chapters. Here the point is simply to stress that drifting has disastrous consequences.

The message Hebrews has in mind is the gospel of salvation which was *first announced by the Lord* (i.e. Jesus) and was confirmed *by those who heard him* (3). The writer and his readers were not part of the first generation of Christians, but they certainly received the gospel from those who were. When the message was given to them by those who had received it from Jesus, God testified to its supernatural origin *by signs, wonders and*

*various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will (4).*

The gospel is of greater significance than *the message spoken by angels* to Israel at Mt Sinai. It is the message delivered by the Son of God himself, concerning eternal salvation and how it is to be obtained. If *every violation and disobedience received its just punishment* under the terms of that earlier revelation, how can there be any *escape* for those who *ignore* or neglect the terms of God's ultimate revelation (2–3)? The judgment facing those who turn their backs on Christ must be greater than any punishment experienced by Israel in OT times. The writer says more about this in 10:26–31.<sup>1</sup>

#### HEBREWS 1:6–14

##### The Messiah Is Superior to Angels

<sup>6</sup> Again, when God brings the firstborn son into the world, he says,

Let all God's angels worship him.

<sup>7</sup> In relation to the angels, this is what it says:

God makes his angels spirits, and his servants flames of fire.

<sup>8</sup> In relation to the son, however, it says,

Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever;

the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of your kingdom;

<sup>9</sup> you loved justice and hated lawlessness,

therefore God, your God, anointed you with the oil of gladness,

as superior to your comrades.

<sup>10</sup> And, again:

You established the earth, O Lord, from the beginning;

---

<sup>1</sup> Peterson, D. G. (1994). Hebrews. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., pp. 1326–1327). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

and the heavens are the works of your hands;

<sup>11</sup> they will be destroyed, but you will remain;

all of them will grow old like clothing,

<sup>12</sup> you will roll them up like a cloak,

and they will be changed like clothing.

But you are the same, and your years will never give out.

<sup>13</sup> But to which of the angels did God ever say,

Sit at my right hand,

until I make your enemies a stool for your feet?

<sup>14</sup> Must we not say, then, that they are all servant spirits, sent to act on behalf of those who are to inherit salvation?

It was Christmas again, and we spent what seemed like a very long time not just buying presents but wrapping them up. Half the fun of Christmas morning, after all, is the exciting packages in glittering wrapping, with ribbons and bows, all telling you something about how wonderful the present itself will be.

But that Christmas one of the children was so excited by the wrapping, and inside the wrapping the beautiful box, that she almost ignored the present itself. Indeed, though she seemed pleased in a way with the present, later that day we found her behind an armchair playing with ... the box. She was using it as a tiny dolls' house for some of her smaller toys. It worked so well, and was after all very pretty. She had laid out the wrapping paper around it, to be a kind of stage set, a backcloth, for the game she was playing. The fact that I can't now remember what was in the box itself—the real present—makes the point.

Hebrews is anxious that the people it's written to shouldn't make that mistake. They are Jewish Christians, as indeed all the very earliest Christians were; but this letter seems to be written not in the very earliest period, but perhaps some time between AD 50 and AD 70, possibly even after that. By that time, some Jewish Christians had got quite used to being part of a family that included **Gentiles**. They had accepted that God's purposes, after long years of preparation, had now been fully unveiled. The wrapping had come off the present; and the present was Jesus himself, God's own, unique son, sent to fulfil everything the **law** and the prophets had spoken of. They could now move on from the earlier stages of God's purpose and gladly live out the new one which had dawned.

But for many other Jewish Christians things weren't so easy. Lots of their family

members, and friends and neighbours too, hadn't accepted that Jesus was the **Messiah**, and regarded them as dangerously misguided and disloyal to all that God had said earlier on. All sorts of pressure would be put on them to try to make them go back to where they'd been before, to abandon this new-found movement with its strange claims and to take up again a position of living under God's law, the law given through Moses. The law was such a magnificent thing; why would you want anything else? After all, it wasn't just given by God, though that would be important enough. It came in splendid wrapping: it was given to Moses (so Jewish tradition declared) by angels ...

This is why the long argument of Hebrews—an argument designed to show that you can't go back to an earlier stage of God's purposes, but must instead go forwards, must press on eagerly from within the new stage to the one that is yet to come—begins with a demonstration, from the Jewish scriptures themselves, that the Messiah was always intended by God to be superior to the angels, and hence (as we discover in the next two chapters) superior to the law that they brought. The law wasn't fixed for all time, as many Jews thought then and still think today; it was part of God's preparation, part of the brilliant and beautiful wrapping in which the ultimate present, God's gift of his own self in the person of the son, would be contained. This is where the letter is warning against the mistake of playing with the wrapping instead of with the present itself.

There are three things in particular which Hebrews wants to say about the way in which the Messiah is superior to the angels, each of which anticipates fuller statements later on in the letter. After the opening in verse 6, when the writer quotes Psalm 97:7 to show that God intends the angels to worship the son, he quotes three more passages about the Messiah, to contrast him with the angels who, according to Psalm 104:4, quoted in verse 7, are servants of God rather than living embodiments of him.

First, in verses 8 and 9, the letter quotes Psalm 45:6–7. This is a breathtaking passage, because it addresses the king (the whole Psalm is about the king) as if he can be called 'God'. It speaks of the king, in this godlike way, as exercising a sovereign rule through which, as many passages said should be the case, uprightness, justice and the rule of true law are put into effect in the world. One of the great themes about God's future purposes throughout the Bible is that God longs for real justice. We who, through our newspapers and television, are all too aware that injustice and wickedness flourish all over the place could do worse than reflect on this promise. Indeed, God's aim of forgiving the sins of his people, about which this letter has so much to say, is all part of the larger aim, to create a world in which evil has at last no place. And the point of the Psalm, as Hebrews quotes it here, is that all this is to happen, not through angels (they are just assistants in the process), but through the true anointed king, the Messiah.

The second passage comes from Psalm 102:25–27 and picks up on the 'for ever and ever' in the previous quotation. There is coming a time, says the Psalm, when the present world, earth and **heaven** alike, will be rolled up like a scroll, and new heavens and a new

earth will take their place. Hebrews returns to this theme at the end of chapter 12, and much of the letter from here to there is to be understood within this framework. God's preparatory purposes through the law and the prophets have reached their climax in the Messiah; and the Messiah himself will be the one who will see God's plan of salvation and justice through to the ultimate 'new age', the '**age to come**', the time of renewed heavens and earth. He is the same, yesterday, today and for ever (13:8); the angels were preparing the way, but he is the one whose life, and saving rule, will last to all eternity (see particularly chapter 7).

The third, shorter passage comes from Psalm 110, one of the passages which was widely used in early Christianity to interpret the meaning of Jesus' messiahship. Hebrews, too, will come back to it several times more. It speaks of the enthronement of God's true king at God's right hand, and of the sovereign rule which he will exercise until everything that thwarts his purpose of justice and salvation will be defeated. Once again, nothing like this is ever said about angels; they, Hebrews concludes, are simply servants, with a job to do within God's purposes. Once you see who the son really is, and the role he was always intended to play in God's plan, you won't want to go back to anything or anyone less.

Not many readers today, perhaps, will be tempted to abandon Christianity in favour of some form of Judaism—though it is important for us to understand why that was such an obvious pressure in the early days. But many today, including many in the churches, seem dissatisfied with what they have, and are eager to expand their spiritual horizons (as they might see it) to include angels, saints and other interesting distractions. Let this letter serve as a warning, and an encouragement. Don't start playing with the wrapping instead of the true present. Pay closer attention to who Jesus really is; to the role he played, and still plays, in God's plan; and to the life of worship and service to which he, and he alone, calls each one of us.

#### HEBREWS 2:1-4

Don't Neglect God's Salvation!

<sup>1</sup> So, then, we must pay all the closer attention to what we heard, in case we drift away from it. <sup>2</sup> You see, if the word which was spoken through angels was reliable, with appropriate punishment every time anyone broke it or disobeyed it, <sup>3</sup> how shall we escape if we ignore a rescue as great as this? It started by being declared through the Lord, and it was confirmed to us by those who heard him; <sup>4</sup> and God bore witness as well, along with them, in signs and wonders and many different types of powerful deeds, and by the holy spirit, distributed in accordance with his will.

A well-known story imagines a devout Christian stuck on a ledge halfway down a cliff. Hundreds of feet below, the sea rages around jagged rocks. Above him is a sheer,

unclimbable wall of rock.

He prays fervently for God to rescue him. Suddenly, a huge eagle appears and invites him to climb on its back. He refuses. A little while later, a helicopter comes by, but he waves it away. Then a light aircraft circles around, offering to drop a rope ladder. Again he refuses it. He continues to pray, 'Lord, why don't you rescue me!' And God answers, 'I sent you a bird, a helicopter and a ladder; why didn't you use them?'

It's a silly story, of course, but it makes several important points. God does indeed answer prayer, but not always in the way we expect. God frequently acts *through* what seem like 'natural', or random, events. If we wait for a bolt from the blue to guide us, heal us or save us, we may miss the apparently 'ordinary' means that God will use—a map to guide us, a doctor to heal us, a helicopter to rescue us. And (the point Hebrews wants to get across in this passage) we will look very stupid if we ignore the very thing God is doing for us on the grounds that it isn't what we had expected or perhaps wanted.

In fact, the letter offers a sequence which looks for a moment not unlike the story. God has already sent the **law** through angels; look what happens if people ignore *that*. Now: what will happen if they refuse to listen to something even more important and powerful? God may have to conclude that they really aren't interested in being rescued, in being saved from the sin and injustice which rages around them like an angry sea, and which not only threatens to engulf us from the outside but which we discover, to our horror, inside us as well. That's why, in this passage and frequently later on, Hebrews insists not just that Christians must stick with what they've got, rather than abandoning it, but also that they must pay *closer* attention, must go deeper into the truth and **life** which is theirs because they belong to the **Messiah**.

The picture Hebrews uses in the first verse, indeed, may be echoing the idea of a dangerous sea: 'in case we drift away from' what we heard. Imagine being in a little motorboat, some way out from shore, needing to find your way along the coast to the right harbour. You need to keep the engine running and a firm hand on the tiller. If you don't, there is no guarantee that you will drift in the right direction, and every probability that you will drift in the wrong one—perhaps onto a rocky shore, or out to the wild ocean where you can't see land any more. This is a warning many Christians need, perhaps especially those who have grown up in a Christian family or as part of a regular church community. It's all too easy to suppose that we can take the pressure off, and allow other people to do the praying, the thinking, the serious business; we'll go along for the ride, we'll stop putting so much effort into it, we'll go with the flow. The problem is that if we haven't got our own motor running, and our own hand on our own tiller, we may drift further and further away without realizing it.

Or, worse perhaps, we may provide a 'drag' on the others. A small boy I once knew was out shopping with his mother, who was pushing his younger sister in a pushchair. As he got

tired and bored, he held on to the pushchair himself, but instead of using his own efforts to walk he was hanging back, so that his mother (as she eventually and crossly realized) was dragging him along as well as pushing the baby and carrying the shopping. Often in church life there are people who have that effect on a congregation or a fellowship; often it's only some distance down the road when the rest realize what's going on. Each of us needs to ask ourselves from time to time whether we are the drifting type, or whether we are going forward, day by day and year by year, paying closer attention to the **message**, not assuming we know it all and can coast along from here on.

The central contrast in this passage, obviously, is between the law of Moses, given through angels, carrying warnings and penalty clauses for those who disobeyed it, and the message concerning Jesus. Modern Western Christians have often seen this contrast in terms of the law as a threatening thing and the **gospel** of Jesus as a soothing, comforting, healing thing. There's much truth in that, but if we forget the other side of it we make the gospel a mere cosy blanket instead of the bracing, challenging, life-changing thing it really is. If the king, the president, the emperor, the prime minister, or whoever is important in your country, sent you a message by a special messenger, you would pay attention, wouldn't you? But, if he turned up in person to see you, you wouldn't just pay attention; you would feel your world was turning upside down. Well, the law was a message from the one true God, sent through the special messengers (the angels). But in the message of the gospel the King himself has come to speak to us directly. What will happen if we say we're too busy, we can't be bothered to come and speak to him, we're reading a nice book and can't tear ourselves away just now?

The writer then offers clear evidence, in case anyone should question him, that the coming of Jesus, and the message which came to them from him, really *was* a visit from the King in person. Jesus himself had declared the **good news** of God's **kingdom**; those who heard him confirmed that it had indeed been so (the way Hebrews says this implies strongly that the writer was not himself a **disciple** during Jesus' earthly ministry). Then, equally important, God himself bore witness to it: when the message was preached, things happened—signs, wonders, mighty deeds, presumably often of healing but perhaps other things too, sudden conversions, the transformation of families, synagogue communities, villages.

In particular, when people believed the message, they discovered a strange new energy inside themselves—a warm, disturbing, personal presence which enabled them to do new things, which put new ideas into their heads, which motivated and energized them to become different people from the inside out. The earliest Christians knew what to call this personal presence inside them: it was God's **holy spirit**, the gift of God's own presence and self, not just in Jesus, important though that was and is, but living within them. Hebrews doesn't often refer to the holy spirit dwelling in people; but this passage, and one or two others, show that the writer takes it for granted.

What evidence is there in your own life, and in your church, that the gospel message of Jesus is true and powerful? If you find that question difficult to answer, could it be because you or your church have begun to drift, ignoring the royal message to which you should be paying closer attention?<sup>2</sup>

A. *The King-Son exalted (1:5–14)*

Drawing heavily on the witness of Old Testament revelation, the writer demonstrated the uniqueness of the Son. The title of Son, and the prerogatives it entails, elevate Him above all comparison with the angels. Those who see in Hebrews ties with sectarian Judaism point to the highly developed angelology of the Dead Sea sect. These verses offer an effective rebuttal against any tendency to give excessive prominence to angels.

1:5. The two questions in this verse show that the name **Son** belongs to Messiah in a sense in which it never belonged to **the angels**. Obviously “Son” is the superior name which Jesus “has inherited” (v. 4). But it is clear that the special sense of this name, in its kingly ramifications, is what basically concerns the writer.

The quotation in verse 5a is drawn from Psalm 2:7, while the quotation in Hebrews 1:5b comes from either 2 Samuel 7:14 or 1 Chronicles 17:13. Psalm 2 is an enthronement psalm in which God “adopts” the Davidic King as His “Son.” That this is what the writer to the Hebrews understood is confirmed in Hebrews 1:5a by the quotation from the Davidic Covenant. No doubt the “today” in the expression **today I have become Your Father** was understood by the author of Hebrews to refer to Messiah’s sitting at the right hand of God (cf. v. 3).

Of course the Lord Jesus Christ has always been the eternal Son of God. In a collective sense, the angels are called “sons of God” in the Old Testament (Job 38:7, marg.), but the writer was thinking of the title **Son** in the sense of the Davidic Heir who is entitled to ask God for dominion over the whole earth (cf. Ps. 2:8). In this sense the title belongs uniquely to Jesus and not to the angels.

1:6. The prerogatives of the One who bears this superlative title are set forth beginning with this verse. Instead of the NIV’s **And again, when God brings His Firstborn into the world**, it would be preferable to translate, “and when He again brings the Firstborn into the world.” The reference is to the Second Advent when the kingly prerogatives of the Son will be recognized with open angelic **worship** (cf. Ps. 97:7 where the LXX rendering “**angels**” correctly renders the text).

---

<sup>2</sup> Wright, T. (2004). *Hebrews for Everyone* (pp. 4–13). London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

1:7–9. In a pair of contrasting quotations, the author juxtaposed the servanthood of **the angels** (v. 7) and the eternal dominion of **the Son** (vv. 8–9). It is possible that, in line with one strand of Jewish thought about angels (cf. 2 Esdras 8:21–22), the writer understood the statement of Psalm 104:4 (quoted in Heb. 1:7) as suggesting that angels often blended their mutable natures with **winds** or **fire** as they performed the tasks God gave them. But in contrast with this mutability, the Son’s **throne** is eternal and immutable (v. 8).

The quotation found in verses 8–9 is derived from Psalm 45:6–7 which describes the final triumph of God’s messianic King. The writer extended this citation further than the previous ones, no doubt because the statements of the psalmist served well to highlight truths on which the author of Hebrews desired to elaborate. The King the psalmist described had **loved righteousness and hated wickedness**. This points to the holiness and obedience of Christ while He was on earth, to which reference will be repeatedly made later (cf. Heb. 3:1–2; 5:7–8; 7:26; 9:14). And though this King thus deservedly enjoys a superlative **joy**, still He has **companions** in that joy. The reference to “companions” is likewise a significant theme for the writer. The same word *metochoi* (“companions or sharers”) is employed in 3:1, 14 of Christians (it is also used in 12:8). Since the King has attained His joy and dominion through a life of steadfast righteousness, it might be concluded that His companions will share His experience by that same means. This inference will later become quite clear (cf. 12:28).

1:10–12. The immutability of the King-Son is further stressed by the statements now quoted from Psalm 102:25–27. A simple “and” (*kai*, disguised a bit by NIV’s **He also says**) links the quotation in these verses with that in Hebrews 1:8–9. That the author construed the words of Psalm 102 as likewise addressed to the Son cannot be reasonably doubted. The Son, then, is **Lord** and has created both **earth** and **the heavens** (cf. Heb. 1:2). But even when the present creation wears out like an old **garment** and is exchanged for a new one, the Son will remain unchanged. The reference here of course is to the transformation of the heavens and earth which will occur after the Millennium and will introduce the eternal state (2 Peter 3:10–13). Yet even after those cataclysmic events the Son’s **years will never end**. This certainly points to His personal eternity, but it is also likely that the word “years” stands for all that they contain for the Son, including an eternal throne and scepter as well as unending joy with His companions. The writer definitely taught that Messiah’s kingdom would survive the final “shaking” of the creation (cf. Heb. 12:26–28).

1:13–14. The writer drew this section to a climax with a final Old Testament quotation, one which is crucial to the entire thought of the epistle. It is taken from Psalm 110 which the author later employed in his elaboration of the Melchizedek priesthood of the Lord Jesus. Here he cited verse 1 of the psalm to highlight the final victory of the Son over His enemies. If the Son is to have an eternal throne (Heb. 1:8), such a victory obviously awaits Him. But the victory is His and not the angels’. Their role, by contrast, is **to serve those who will inherit salvation**.

It should not be automatically assumed that “salvation” here refers to a believer’s past experience of regeneration. On the contrary it is something future as both the context and the words “will inherit” suggest. As always, the writer of Hebrews must be understood to reflect the ethos of Old Testament thought, especially so here where a chain of references to it form the core of his argument. And it is particularly in the Psalms, from which he chiefly quoted in this chapter, that the term “salvation” has a well-defined sense. In the Psalms this term occurs repeatedly to describe the deliverance of God’s people from the oppression of their **enemies** and their consequent enjoyment of God’s blessings. In the Septuagint, the Greek Bible so familiar to the writer, the word “salvation” (*s t r i a*) was used in this sense in Psalms 3:2, 8; 18:2, 35, 46, 50; 35:3; 37:39; 71:15; 118:14–15, 21; 132:16; and elsewhere. This meaning is uniquely suitable here where the Son’s own triumph over enemies has just been mentioned.

**That the readers were under external pressure there is little reason to doubt. They had endured persecution in the past and were exhorted not to give up now (Heb. 10:32–36). Here the writer reminded them that the final victory over all enemies belongs to God’s King and that the angels presently serve those who are destined to share in that victory, that is, to “inherit salvation.”**

*B. The first warning (2:1–4)*

The writer now paused in his exposition to address the readers with the first in a series of five urgent warnings. (The others are in chaps. 3–4; 5:11–6:20; 10:19–39; 12.) This one is the briefest and most restrained of all of them, but is nonetheless solemn.

2:1. The truth he had just enunciated has important implications. The therefore shows that this admonition arose directly from the preceding material. Since the Son is so supremely great and is destined for final triumph over His enemies, the readers would do well to pay more careful attention to these realities. The danger is that, if they would not, they might drift away (*parary men*, a word that occurs only here in the NT). The writer’s audience was marked by immaturity and spiritual sluggishness (cf. 5:11–12), and if this trait were not eliminated there was danger of their slipping away from what they had heard. The author may have had the Septuagint rendering of Proverbs 3:21 in mind, where the Greek translators used the word for “drift away” that is found here: “My son, do not slip away, but keep my counsel and intent.”

2:2–4. Inasmuch as under the Old Covenant, which was instituted through angelic ministrations (Gal. 3:19), there were severe penalties for infractions of its demands, the readers could not suppose there would be no penalties for infractions against the New Covenant. On the contrary, with tantalizing vagueness, the author asked, **How shall we escape** (cf. Heb. 12:25) **if we ignore such a great salvation?** If the readers lost sight of the ultimate victory and deliverance that was promised to them in connection with the Son’s own final victory, they could expect retribution. What its nature might be the writer did not

spell out, but it would be unwarranted to think he was talking about hell. The “we” which pervades the passage shows that the author included himself among those who needed to pay close attention to these truths.

**The “salvation,” of course, is the same as that just mentioned in 1:14 (see comments there) and alludes to the readers’ potential share in the Son’s triumphant dominion, in which He has “companions” (cf. 1:9). The Lord Jesus Himself, while on earth, spoke much of His future kingdom and the participation of His faithful followers in that reign (cf., e.g., Luke 12:31–32; 22:29–30). But this salvation experience, which was first announced by the Lord had also received confirmation through the various miracles and manifestations of the Spirit which His original auditors, those who heard Him, were empowered to exhibit. In speaking like this, the writer of Hebrews regarded these miracles as the powers of the coming Age (cf. Heb. 6:5) and, in harmony with the early Christians in the Book of Acts, saw them as expressions of the sovereignty of the One who had gone to sit at God’s right hand (cf. “signs,” “wonders,” and/or “miracles” in Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:6, 13; 14:3; 15:12; also cf. 2 Cor. 12:12). That the author was indeed thinking throughout of “the world to come” is made clear in Hebrews 2:5.<sup>3</sup>**

(1:3)

But now the inspired writer brings to our attention a greater miracle than the creation and the sustaining of the universe, when he says, “When he had by himself purged our sins.” The words “by himself” are the translation of a rejected reading, and so will not be considered in our study, nor included in our translation. The Greek here is “having made purification of sins.” The words “having made” are the translation of a participle in the middle voice, which voice represents the person as either acting upon himself or in his own interest. Thus, when the Son of God made purification of sins, He did so by Himself, acting upon Himself, offering Himself as the Sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:12), and for Himself, acting in His own interest. The voice of the participle has given us more truth than the rejected reading *di’ heautou* (δ ι ἐ α υ τ ο υ) (by himself). The word “purged” of the A.V., and our word “purification” which we have used, are the translation of *katharismos* (κ α θ α ρ ι σ μ ο ς).

*Alford* is careful to note the fact that the Greek text does not read “purification” *apo* (ἀ π ο) (from) sins, but “purification” of (genitive case) sins. He says, “Sin was the great uncleanness, of which He has effected the purgation: the disease of which He has wrought

<sup>3</sup> Hodges, Z. C. (1985). Hebrews. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 781–783). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

the cure.” He makes the point that *katharismos* (καθαρισμός) “must be understood by the subsequent argument of the Epistle: for that which the Writer had it in his mind to expand in the course of his treatise, he must be supposed to have meant when he used without explanation a concise term like this. And that we know to have been, the purifications and sacrifices of the Levitical law, by which man’s natural uncleanness in God’s sight was typically removed, and access to God laid open to him.” The writer has put this most succinctly in 9:26 where he says; “He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” One could translate, “He has appeared, resulting in the putting away of sin by His sacrifice.” The words “putting away” are the translation of *thetos* (θετος) meaning “placed,” or “set,” “having position,” and Alpha privative prefixed which negates the word, making it mean, “not placed or set,” “not having position.” The verb means “to do away with something laid down, prescribed, established.” Sin had established itself in the human race through the disobedience of Adam, a sinful nature and acts of sin.

When God saves a sinner, He breaks the power of the indwelling sinful nature at the moment that sinner places his faith in the Lord Jesus (Romans 6). When that believer dies, he loses the sinful nature, and in his glorified body has only the divine nature. God also removes the guilt and penalty of sin and gives the believer a righteous standing. The Son of God made all this possible when He died on the Cross. His blood delivers the believer from the power of sin in this present life, and from the presence of sin in the future life. His blood removes the guilt and penalty of sin and cleanses the believer from its defilement. That is what is included in the act of our Lord making purification for sins.

The participle is in the aorist tense, which indicates that His act of making purification for sins was a single definite act, and a once-for-all act. The writer had just been speaking of the fact that the Son was the creator, sustainer, and motivator of all things from their beginning all down the ages of time. It was and is His responsibility to see to it that they in the plan of God are brought to a final ultimate and proper conclusion. Sin interposed itself in the smooth-working perfect universe. In carrying on all things to the desired end, the Son had to confront and deal with sin which had thrown the world into disorder and out of God’s order.

**When His work on the Cross was finished, the Son “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” The seated posture indicates that His work was finished, in contrast to the Levitical priests who never sat down so far as their tabernacle work was concerned, and for the reason that their work was never finished, and this because the blood of bulls and goats could not pay for sin.** The verb “sat down” denotes a *solemn, formal* act. It speaks of the assumption of a position of dignity and authority. The reference is to the Son’s glorification and ascension. In His exalted state He is still bearing on all things toward their destined consummation, and is still dealing with sin as the Great High Priest, saving believing sinners in His precious blood and cleansing saints from the defilement of sin that at times enters their lives.

With this, the inspired writer closes his argument to the effect that the Son of God is superior to the Old Testament prophets. He has enumerated seven superiorities. *First*, the Son is superior to the Old Testament prophets in that, whereas they were the mouthpieces of God, He was God Himself speaking on earth. *Second*, the Son inherits all things, the prophets being part of that inheritance. *Third*, the Son created all things and is the One who operates and manages the universe and all its creatures all down the successive ages of time. *Fourth*, the Son is the effulgence, the out-ricing of the glory of God, not merely in the sense that He is the outshining of that glory, but that He Himself is a divine center of the out-ricing of God's glory, co-eternal and co-existent with the Father, of the same substance as the Father and, while the Son by eternal generation from the Father, yet also very God of very God, possessing in Himself life and light. For instance, the sunshine resting upon the earth is of the same essence as the light still in the sun, and is the outshining of the light in the sun. But the Lord Jesus is more than that illustration includes. He is not merely the outshining of God's glory, but the outshining of that glory which in itself becomes a center from which the glory of God out-rices itself. *Fifth*, the Son is the exact impression of the Person and the character of Deity, thus its exact expression. *Sixth*, the Son carries the weight of the universe, maintains its coherence, and carries on its development. *Seventh*, He has by the shedding of His own blood on the Cross, put away sin.

Is He better than the prophets? Yes, infinitely so. Not one of these superiorities could be ascribed to the Old Testament prophets, or for that matter, to any ancient or modern so-called prophet of any religious system. In view of the Son's superiorities over God's prophets, what audacity it is for Modernism to place Socrates alongside of the Son of God. What sacrilege to say that He was only a human being. The Jesus of the Gospels is the Jesus of the Epistle to the Hebrews (2:9). Again, what a low-estimate first century Israel had of its Messiah, as shown by the fact that the writer needed to demonstrate that He was superior to its prophets.

Translation. Who, being the out-ricing (effulgence) of His glory and the exact reproduction of His essence, and sustaining, guiding, propelling all things by the word of His power, having made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

## 2. *The angels (1:4–2:18) since He*

### a. Has a better name, Son (1:4, 5).

(1:4) **The writer says that the Son was made better than the angels. The informal and abrupt introduction of angels, shows that the writer was addressing Jews, who were familiar with the important part the angels played in the Old Testament, particularly in the giving of the law.** The word "made" is the translation of *ginomai* ( γ ι ν ο μ α ι ), a word the meaning of which is in contrast to that of *poieo* ( π ο ι ε ο ) which means "to make." The latter means "to construct or fashion something out of existing

materials.” The former is the word used of the universe coming into existence. It means “to become.” The Son became better than the angels, inferring that at one time He was lower than the angels. The writer does not deny that He was, and is, essentially and eternally better than the angels. He is speaking here of His glorification which was conditioned upon His fulfilment of the requirements of His human state, which He emphasizes. **After He had passed through the experience described in Philippians 2:6-8, He sat down on the right hand of the divine Majesty as Messianic sovereign, and thus became and was proved to be that which in reality He always was, superior to the angels. The superiority here is not that of moral excellence, but of dignity and power. He became superior to the angels when He resumed His preincarnate dignity at His resurrection. The writer tells us in 2:7, 9, that for a little time, i.e., during His incarnation previous to His glorification, He was made lower than the angels.**

This Sonship is referred by the writer to the Old Testament, where the Messiah, then future, was spoken of as Son. The writer, in support of this fact of Sonship, adduces an abundance of evidence, citing no fewer than seven passages from the Old Testament. The Messianic Sonship rests upon the Eternal Sonship. But the latter is not in view here, rather the former.

But, the question arises, Why does the inspired writer bring in a comparison between the Son and angels? The answer is as follows: The entire Old Testament dispensation is related to the New Testament dispensation as the angels are related to the Son. In the former dispensation, mankind and God are separated by sin. The angels stand as mediators between God and man. Here there was a chain of two links, Moses, and the angel of the Lord. In the former, we have a mere man raised above his fellows by being given a commission to lead Israel, and brought nearer to God. But he is a sinner like his brethren. In the latter, we have God revealing Himself in angelic form to Israel, but without becoming Man. There was no real union of the Godhead and Manhood.

How different it is in the New Testament dispensation. God and Man become personally One in the Son incarnate. God no longer accommodates Himself to the capacities of man in an angelophony or theophony, but has revealed Himself in the Son become incarnate. The writer’s thesis throughout the letter is that the New Testament is better than the First Testament. If he can show that the One Mediator between God and man of the New Testament is superior to the mediators of the First, the angels, then he has shown that the New Testament takes the place of the First. And this he proceeds to do.

He says. “He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” The words “hath by inheritance obtained” are in the perfect tense in the Greek text, literally, “He inherited in times past with the present result that the inheritance is in His permanent possession.” The use of the perfect here shows that the writer is speaking of a past completed action, and of the present abiding results. The words “more excellent” are the translation of *diaphoroteron* (δ ι α φ ο ρ ο τ ε ρ ο υ ). The Greek comparative for

“better” is *kreitton* (κ ρ ε ι τ τ ο υ ). The former word means literally “more different.” “Than they” is in the Greek text *par’ autous* (π α ρ α υ τ ο υ ς), literally, “alongside of them.” That is, the Son has a name more different for good beside, or in comparison to the angels.

Translation. Having become as much superior to the angels as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

*(1:5) The writer now proceeds with his argument by asking a rhetorical question expressing a denial of the fact that the angels were ever given the name Son, and he follows that by bringing to the attention of his Jewish readers seven quotations from their Old Testament Scriptures.*

The first quotation is from Psalm 2:7. In the Greek text, the order of the words is, “Son of mine thou art.” The word “Son” is in the emphatic position. In the Old Testament “son” is applied to the angels collectively, but never individually (Job 1:6; Ps. 89:6). The word “son” is applied to the chosen nation (Ex. 4:22; Hos. 11:1). Psalm 2 is a Messianic psalm. The word “begotten” here does not refer either to the Son’s eternal generation from God the Father, or to His generation in time as the incarnate Son of Man, but as the context shows, to the act of God the Father establishing in an official sonship-relation, His Son at the resurrection. “The psalm was written to celebrate the accession of a king, Solomon or some other, but the writer, seeing in his mind’s eye the ideal King, clothes the new monarch in His robes.” The idea in the words, “I have begotten thee” are “I have begotten thee to kingly dignity.” The reference is not to entrance into life, but to entrance to an office. The Messianic reference is to the Son’s resurrection (Acts 13:33), and to the declaration of the Father with reference to the character of the Son as Son of God, this declaration being substantiated by the resurrection of the Son (Rom. 1:4). But the writer reminds his readers that such statements were never made of angels.

The second quotation is from II Samuel 7:14. While it is conceded that a faint and primary reference to Solomon is found in verses 12–16, yet the clear and final reference is to the Son. Solomon’s kingdom was not established but divided, whereas the Son’s kingdom will be eternal. Solomon built a temple for God, but the Son will build the Millennial Temple. With regard to the words in verse 14, “If he commit iniquity,” Dr. James M. Gray in his *Christian Workers’ Commentary* says, “Bishop Horseley’s and Adam Clarke’s translation ... is interesting and significant: ‘When iniquity is laid upon Him, I will chasten Him with the rod of men’—a parallel to Isaiah 53 concerning the suffering Messiah.” Other Hebrew scholars reject the above translation, and are in accord with that of the A.V., explaining the statement as generic in character, namely, that the act of committing sin was true of the Davidic line but not of the Messiah. The writer to the Hebrews applies the words “I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son,” directly to the Lord Jesus. This was never said of angels. They were sons of God by creation. The Messiah of the Book of Hebrews is Son of God by eternal generation, Son of God in His incarnation, and Son of God in an official

relationship as Messiah consequent upon His resurrection. The Son is therefore better than angels. He has inherited a better name than they.

Translation. For to which of the angels did He say at any time, Son of mine thou art, I this day have begotten thee? And again, I will be to Him for a Father, and He Himself shall be to Me for a Son?

**b. Is worshipped by angels (v. 6).**

(1:6) The third quotation is introduced by the words, “And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith.” It will be observed that the word “again” is used to indicate the addition of a new quotation to the preceding ones. But *Vincent, Expositor’s*, and *Alford* insist that *palin* (π α λ ι ν) (again) by its juxtaposition to the verb “bring in,” is to be understood as being used with that verb. The order of the words in the Greek text is “Whenever and again He brings in.” When used with a verb in Hebrews, the word means “a second time” (5:12, 6:1, 2) The meaning therefore is, “When He a second time bringeth in the first-begotten into the world,” reference being to the second advent of Messiah.

The verb is aorist subjunctive, culminative aorist. The event is viewed as occurring at an indefinite time in the future, but viewed as complete. It is, “Whenever He shall have brought.” The translation is much like that of the future perfect, except that the future perfect refers to a future act, but with no qualifications that are indefinite.

The word “first-begotten” is the translation of *prototokos* (π ρ ο τ ο τ ο κ ο ς), a term used by Paul in Colossians 1:15 and by the writer to the Hebrews here, of the Son of God. The term speaks of priority to all creation and sovereignty over all creation. Whereas the term “only-begotten” (*monogenes* (μ ο ν ο γ ε ν ε ς)) describes the unique relationship of the Son to the Father in His divine nature, *prototokos* (π ρ ο τ ο τ ο κ ο ς) (first-begotten) describes the relation of the risen Messiah in His glorified humanity to man.

The word “world” is here the translation of *oikoumene* (ο ι κ ο υ μ ε ν ε ς), “the inhabited earth.” This word was used at the time this epistle was written, to refer to the entire Roman empire. At the accession of Nero, the proclamation referred to him in the words, “and the expectation and hope of the world (*oikoumene* (ο ι κ ο υ μ ε ν ε ς)) has been declared Emperor, the good genius and source of all good things, Nero, has been declared Caesar.” It will be into the midst of the Revived Roman Empire headed up by Antichrist, that God will bring the Messiah, the empire at that future time covering the entire earth.

It is of that future time that God says concerning the Messiah, “And let all the angels of God worship him.” The quotation is from the LXX (Deut. 32:43) where Moses speaks of the victory of God over His enemies, and the avenging of His people. The writer probably also had Psalm 96:7 in mind. The return of the Messiah to this earth will be accompanied by

hosts of worshipping angels (II Thess. 1:7, Rev. 19:11–16). The argument of the writer is that if the Son is to be worshipped by angels, surely He must be superior to them, which fact makes the New Testament He inaugurated better than the First Testament which they were instrumental in bringing in.

Translation. And whenever He shall have brought again the first-begotten into the inhabited earth, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him.

**c. *Is Creator and Master of angels (v.7).***

(1:7) The fourth quotation is from Psalm 104:4 (LXX). The word “spirits” is the translation of *pneuma* (πνεύμα), which means “wind, spirit, messenger.” Here the meaning is “winds.” The emphasis is upon the variableness of the angelic nature. They are what they are at any time by the decree of God, fitted by their character to any special service. The point of the writer is that the angels are not merely servants, but of such a nature that God makes them according to the needs of His service, and being such as they are, they are changeable, in marked contrast to the Son who is their ruler, and unchangeable. The word “servants” is the translation of *leitourgos* (λεῖτοῦργος), the word used of the sacred and religious ministry of the Old Testament priests. Since Messiah is the Creator and Master of angels, He is superior to them, which fact makes the New Testament better than the First which it displaces.

Translation. And with reference to the angels He saith, Who maketh His angels winds, and His servants a flame of fire.

**d. *Has an eternal throne and is anointed with the Holy Spirit (vv. 8, 9).***

(1:8, 9) The fifth quotation is from Psalm 45:6, 7. The word “righteousness” in the A.V., (v. 8), is not the translation of *dikaosune* (δικαιοσύνη) but of *euthutetos* (εὐθὺς) which means more properly “rectitude, uprightness.” The word “righteousness” in verse 9 is the translation of *dikaosune* (δικαιοσύνη) which means “that which conforms to a standard or norm which is itself in keeping with what God is in His holy character.” “Anointed” is the translation of *chrío* (χρίο) which is always used in the New Testament of the anointing with the Holy Spirit, *aleipho* (ἀλείφω) being used uniformly of the anointing with oil. Here the oil of joy refers to the Holy Spirit who bestows joy, and thus the word *chrío* (χρίο) is used fittingly here. Kings were anointed in Israel with oil when they ascended the throne. Our Lord was anointed with the Holy Spirit for His three-fold office of prophet, priest, and king, at His baptism in the Jordan, which was at the time of His entrance into His ministry. The word “fellows” is the translation of *metochos* (μετοχος), which word refers to one who is a co-participant with someone else in a common undertaking. Here the angels are viewed as co-participants with Messiah in His work of salvation and future sovereignty over the redeemed creation. The emphasis of the passage is upon the fact that Messiah’s future kingdom is an eternal

one, and that He as the anointed King will rule in righteousness. Isaiah XI speaks of His millennial reign and of the fact that He will be the King anointed with the Spirit. As such, the angels will be associated with Him in that reign, but He will be their sovereign Lord, they His servants. All of which again means that Messiah is better than angels.

Translation. And with reference to the Son; Thy throne, O God, is forever and forever. And the sceptre of equality is the sceptre of His kingdom. Thou didst love righteousness and didst hate lawlessness. On this account there has anointed thee, God, Thy God, with the oil of exultant joy above thy associates.

**e. Is unchangeable (vv. 10–12).**

(1:10) In the support of his argument to the effect that the Son is better than the angels, the writer quotes Psalm 102:25–27. The unchangeable and eternal power and majesty of the Son, spoken of in verses 11, 12, find their basis in the fact that He is the One who laid the foundation of the earth and fashioned the heavens.

Translation. As for thee, in the beginning, O Lord, thou didst lay the foundation of the earth. And the works of thy hands are the heavens.

*(1:11) The word “they” refers back, not to the earth, but to the heavens. The Greek text makes this clear. The pronoun is intensive, “they themselves.” The word “remainest” is from diameno ( ). The simple verb meno ( ) means “to remain.” The prefixed preposition dia ( ) is intensive in force, making the compound word mean “to remain permanently.” The verb is in the present. It is not “shalt remain.” “Permanency is the characteristic of God in the absolute and eternal” (Vincent). The words “shall wax old,” are the translation of palaioo ( ) which means “to make ancient or old, to be worn out.” The idea here is not that the heavens will become old so far as lapse of time is concerned, but old in the sense of wearing out. The Greeks had a word for “old in point of lapsed time” namely, archaios ( ).*

Translation. They themselves shall perish, but as for thee, thou dost remain permanently. And all these shall become old and worn out as a garment.

*(1:12) The word “vesture” is the translation of peribolaion ( ), literally, “that which is thrown around.” The word speaks of a mantle, a wrapper, an article of clothing which is wrapped around one. “Shalt fold” should be “roll up,” the mistake being due to a scribal error. “Shall fail” is in the Greek text “shall fail” in the sense of “shall be ended, shall leave off,” the word leipo ( ) “to leave” being used. The angels, being part of the Son’s creation, are as subject to change and decay as are the heavens. He, the changeless One, is therefore superior to them.*

Translation. And as a garment which one throws about one’s self shall they be rolled up; as a garment also shall they be changed. But as for thee, thou art

the same, and thy years shall not leave off.

***f. Is seated at God's right hand (vv. 13, 14).***

(1:13) The seventh quotation is from Psalm 110:1. These words were spoken to the Son, but never to an angel. The word "sit" is present tense imperative in the Greek text, which construction emphasizes durative action, literally, "be sitting," a permanent place. "On my right hand" is literally "from my right hand." The usual formula is "on my right hand." The ablative case and the preposition *ek* (ἐκ) indicate a moving from the right and taking the seat. The meaning, *Vincent* says, is "be associated with Me in my royal dignity."

Translation. But to which of the angels did He say at any time, Be sitting at my right hand until I set your enemies down as the footstool of your feet.

*(1:14) Here the writer sums up the function of the angels as compared to that of the Son. He is the highest dignity, a co-ruler with God. They are His servants, appointed to minister to the heirs of redemption.*

Translation. Are not they all ministering servants sent on a commission for the sake of those who are about to inherit salvation?

*Note. In the midst of his argument, "the Son is better than the angels" (1:4–14, 2:5–18), the writer issues an exhortation and a warning (2:1–4) to these Hebrews who had outwardly left the temple sacrifices, had made a profession of Messiah as High Priest, and who were in danger of renouncing that profession and of returning to the sacrifices.*

**g. Has ushered in a Testament which displaces theirs (2:1–4).**

**(1) Warning against letting New Testament truth slip away (v.1).**

(2:1) The exhortation is to give more earnest heed to the New Testament message, and the warning, against letting that truth slip away. The nature of the sin of Adam was a careless, indifferent attitude towards the commands of God. The particular word which is translated "disobedience" in Romans 5:19 (*parakoe* (παράκοη)) means literally "to hear alongside," thus, "a failing to hear, a hearing amiss." But this failure to hear is due to a carelessness in paying attention to what God had to say. Back of that carelessness is the desire to have our own will. Under pressure of persecution, these Jews were discontinuing their attendance upon the Christian assemblies (10:25), and giving less and less heed to the New Testament truth. The reason for this failure to attend earnestly upon the truth of the new dispensation was that these Hebrews were desirous of getting out from under the persecution to which they were being subjected from apostate Judaism. Entrenched and apostate ecclesiasticism was trying to take these Jews away from the visible Church and bring them back to the temple. Thus does sin lead us to take the easy road, tempting us to

sell our birthright for a mess of pottage (12:16, 17).

The words “let them slip” are the translation of *pararuomen* (π α ρ α ρ ο υ ο μ ε ν ) which Vincent translates “should drift past them.” The verb itself means “to flow,” and the prefixed preposition, “alongside.” The word was used of the snow slipping off from the soldiers’ bodies, and of a ring slipping from the finger. Vincent quotes a rendering of Proverbs 4:21 as follows: “Let not my words flow past before thine eyes.”

The words “give the more earnest heed” are literally “to give heed more abundantly.” “Give heed” is the translation of *prosecho* (π ρ ο σ ε χ ο ) which means literally “to hold to,” thus, in its use here, “to hold (the mind) to.” But these Hebrews are to give the more earnest heed “on account of this;” “because of this,” the Greek has it. Because of what? Because the Son is better than the prophets and the angels. Israel had given heed to the First Testament truth which was ministered to it by the prophets and the angels. Now, because the Son is superior to these, the Testament He brought in is better than the one they introduced. They should therefore hold their minds the more earnestly to it.

Translation. On this account it is a necessity in the nature of the case for us to give heed more abundantly to the things which we have heard lest at any time we should drift past them.

**(2) *If rejection of First Testament truth was punished (v. 2), how much more will rejection of New Testament truth be punished (v. 3), which truth was spoken by the Lord, confirmed by those who heard Him, and attested by miracles (vv. 2–4).***

(2:2) The Greek word “if” represents a fulfilled condition, not an hypothetical case. The idea is, “in view of the fact that.” The word spoken by angels is the First Testament (Acts 7:38, 53). The agency of angels shows the limits of the dispensation of law. The setting aside of the First Testament, means the abolition of man’s subordination to angels. Such subordination is inconsistent with man’s ultimate destiny to sovereignty over all creation. The word spoken by angels was steadfast, proved sure, proved inviolable, held good.

“Transgression” is the translation of *parabasis* (π α ρ α β α σ ι ς), “a stepping over the line,” “disobedience,” the rendering of *parakoe* (π α ρ α κ ο ε ), “a disobedience which results from neglecting to hear, from letting things drift by.” The First Testament was steadfast, inviolable, in that every overstepping of the line, every neglecting to hear, was punished.

Translation. For in view of the fact that the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every over-stepping of the line and neglecting to hear received a just recompense of reward;

(2:3) “How” is from *pos* ( ) which means “how is it possible?” The rhetorical

*question expresses a denial. There would be no escape. The word “we” in the Greek text is emphatic. The pronoun refers here to the first-century readers of this letter, its Jewish recipients. It is “we” to whom God spoke in One who in character is His Son, and who therefore have much more reason for giving heed. “Escape” is the translation of ekpheugo ( ) which means literally “to flee out from.”*

The words “if we neglect” have their primary reference to the Jews of the period in which the writer lived, who had outwardly left the temple sacrifices, had made a profession of Messiah as High Priest, and who under stress of persecution from apostate Judaism, were neglecting attendance upon the means of grace (10:25), were allowing themselves to drift by New Testament truth, were leaning back towards the First Testament, and were in danger of returning to the temple sacrifices, an act that would constitute the sin known as apostasy, from which there would be no recovery. The writer is trying to keep them from committing that sin.

The word “salvation” refers to salvation itself, not to the teaching concerning it. The word “which” in the Greek text is qualitative in nature. The idea is, “salvation which is of such a character” as to have been spoken by the Lord. The message of salvation given by the angels was typical in its method of presentation. It looked forward. It was not final in itself, since sin had not actually been dealt with. It was given in many parts and in many ways. But the message of salvation given by the Lord was in its character, final. He was not only the Spokesman but the One who brought into being and made available to believing sinners, the salvation which He announced. Our Lord announced the New Testament as taking the place of the First Testament, when He said, “This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:28).

These Hebrews had been convinced of the trustworthiness of the First Testament. They were beginning to doubt the validity of the New Testament. The law had proved its validity by punishing transgressors. But the certainty of the new revelation was becoming doubtful to them. Therefore, the writer speaks of the New Testament as “so great salvation,” and shows its trustworthiness by adducing the following three features: first, it was originally proclaimed by the Lord; second, it was confirmed by those that heard Him; third, it was certified as from God by reason of the miracles that accompanied its announcement.

The word “Lord,” *kurios* (κ υ ρ ι ο ς), in the Greek, is the word used in the LXX to translate the august title of God in Israel, Jehovah. To the Jewish readers of this epistle, it meant just that. The First Testament was given by angels; the New Testament, by Jehovah personally. And, being of such a nature as would be expected of Jehovah, these Hebrews were certainly obligated to give more earnest heed to it than to one given by angels.

The second proof of the validity of the New Testament which the writer brings to the attention of his readers, is that those who heard the Lord Himself and His presentation of the New Testament truth, and here the reference is presumably to official witnesses, the

apostles, confirmed the truth of the New Testament to the writer of the letter who refers to himself by the pronoun “us,” the literary “we.”

Translation. How is it possible for us to escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which salvation is of such a character as to have been spoken at the first by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him.

*(2:4) But this confirmation not only had back of it the official sanction of those who heard the Lord, and their attested characters and veracity, but also the accompaniment of miracles. The attesting power of miracles was well known. The primary purpose of miracles in the first century was not to alleviate distress and suffering, but to prove that the one performing the miracles, spoke or wrote from God (John 3:2; Matt. 11:2–5).*

These miraculous manifestations were in the form of signs (*semeion* (σ ε μ ε ι ο ν)), “a sign, mark or token miraculous in nature,” wonders (*teras* (τ ε ρ α ς)), “something so strange as to cause it to be watched, miraculous in nature,” divers miracles (*dunamis* (δ υ ν α μ ι ς)) “a supernatural act which has in it the inherent power of God,” thus, a miracle, and gifts (*merismos* (μ ε ρ ι σ μ ο ς)), “distributions or impartations” from the Holy Spirit, the latter construction being subjective genitive, in which the person in the genitive case performs the action in the noun of action, here the word *merismos* (μ ε ρ ι σ μ ο ς), (distributions, impartations). For a catalogue of all these, one can go to the Gospels, the Book of Acts, and to First Corinthians.

Translation. God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with variegated miracles, and with distributions from the Holy Spirit, according to His will.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Heb 1:2–2:4). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.