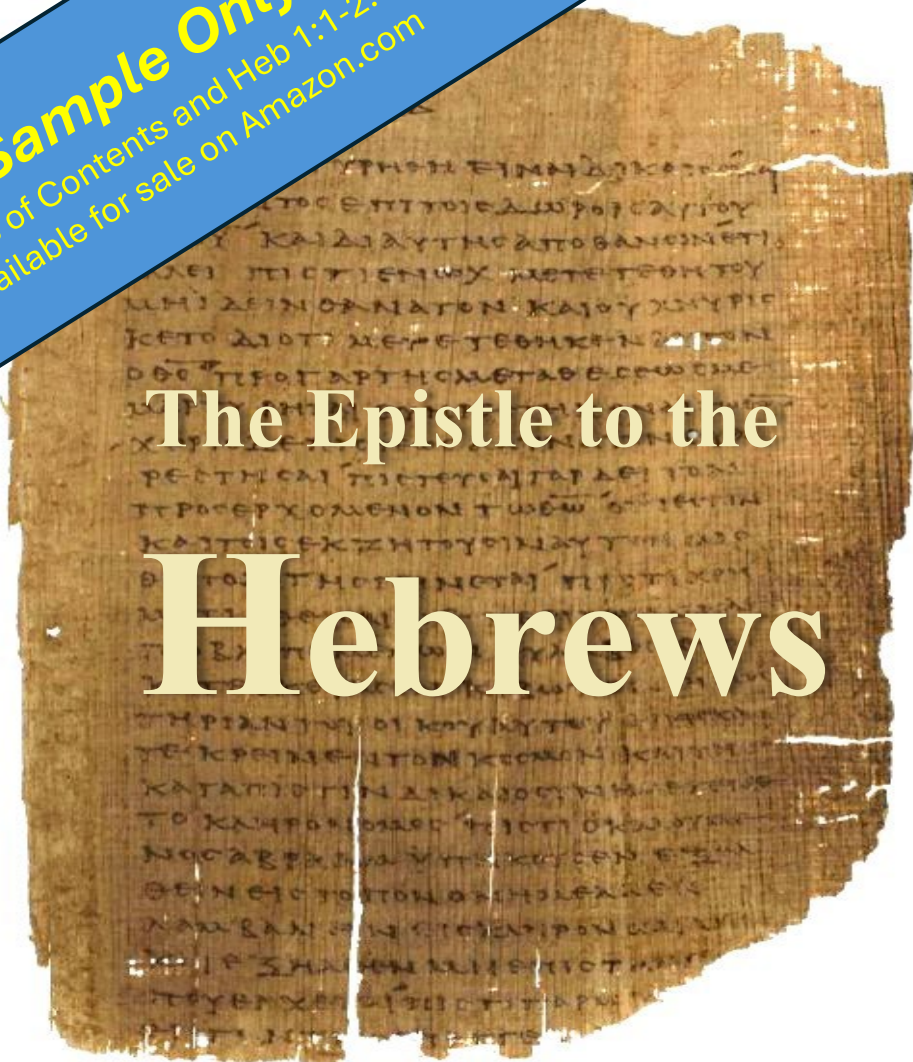


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# The Epistle to the Hebrews

*Enduring in Faith  
To Receive a Great Reward*

J. Paul Tanner

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# THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

*Enduring in Faith to Receive a Great  
Reward*



J. Paul Tanner



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This humble work is affectionately dedicated to

*Jim and Phyllis Ann Rose*

who have set before me and others a true example of  
faithfulness  
in running the race and enduring to the end. Their words of  
encouragement and their tireless prayers have buoyed me  
throughout my ministry. I am confident they will be  
greatly rewarded according to God's precious promises.

*“And without faith it is impossible to please Him,  
for he who comes to God must believe that He is  
and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”*

Hebrews 11:6

“The New Testament book that surpasses all the others in its direct and indirect use of the Old Testament is the anonymous Epistle to the Hebrews.”

S. Lewis Johnson

*The Old Testament in the New*

## Preface

Perhaps no other New Testament book has raised as many questions and spurred as many theological challenges as the anonymous Epistle to the Hebrews. Who wrote it? To whom did he write? What circumstances prompted him to write to those who first received this epistle? Of even greater significance, what was his theological stance regarding salvation, God's future kingdom, and the believer's perseverance? Indeed, the *warning passages* of the epistle have perplexed the greatest of New Testament scholars. As a result, if there has been a major scriptural battleground between Reformed and Arminian theology, it is surely to be found in the pages of Hebrews. Are the warning passages (e.g., Hebrews 6:4-6) written to true believers or not? Arminian theology answers "yes," but then asserts that failure to heed the warnings can result in loss of salvation. Reformed theology, on the other hand, asserts that the warnings are not to genuine Christians but rather to those who, having had exposure to the light of the gospel, nevertheless are failing to trust completely in the saving work of Christ. Continuance in unbelief, so they argue, will result in damnation to hell.

In this brief commentary, I contend that both these positions are wrong and inadequately account for the details of the text. Given that the author repeatedly addresses his readers as "brethren," they are surely genuine Christians . . . yet Christians who are in danger of failure in the Christian life. That is, they are being tempted to abandon their Christian pilgrimage. For some, assuming the original audience was primarily Jewish converts to Christianity, this might mean retreating back into some form of Judaism. Abandonment of their Christian pilgrimage, however, does not have to mean loss of salvation (and I don't think the author has that in mind). Rather, the

danger is that of incurring God's temporal discipline in this life, along with a negative experience when they stand before the Lord at the judgment seat of Christ. Indeed, they are in danger of jeopardizing their future rewards and the role they will have in the future messianic kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the mind of the author of Hebrews, this is of serious consequence. Therefore, he writes with a sense of urgency to warn them of the dangers that unbelief in the Christian life can bring about, as well as seeking to spur them on to endure by faith through the challenges of this present life, in hopes that they will secure for themselves a great reward upon the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The capstone of the epistle is best reflected in the words of Hebrews 10:35-36:

*<sup>35</sup> Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. <sup>36</sup> For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.*

The practical implications of this epistle are enormous. Too many Christians today are ignoring their inheritance in the future messianic kingdom. They are living too much for today and not enough for the future time of their resurrection life. The Epistle to the Hebrews is then a wake-up call for all Christians to remain faithful to Christ as they endure through the difficulties of this life while emulating the faith of believers who have gone before us. The promises at stake are too precious to ignore. One day it will all really matter!

If this brief commentary does anything to arouse an *enduring faith* in the life of fellow Christians, then all the effort put into the writing of this volume will have been more than worth the time and energy expended!

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## The Prologue to the Book (1:1-4)

With the death of Christ, the New Covenant has now replaced the Old (Mosaic) Covenant. The prologue introduces several important themes related to the coming of the New Covenant. Some of these themes (e.g., the Son being better than the angels) will be further developed in the remainder of chapter 1. Others are further developed elsewhere—such as God’s speaking through the Son (see Heb 2:1; 2:3; 12:25), His position at the Father’s right hand in fulfillment of Psalm 110 (see Heb 8:1; 10:12; 12:2), and the Son’s priestly work of purification of sins (see Heb 2:17; 5:6; and chaps. 7–10). The prologue conveys that God has given His ultimate revelation through the exalted Son of God, who as high priest has atoned for our sins and as King awaits His final inheritance. This prepares the readers for the challenge to be faithful to the Son and the New Covenant He has ushered in.

### The Basic Assertion: God Has Made His Climactic Revelation (Heb 1:1-2a)

To say that **God has spoken to us in a son** means that He has made His climactic revelation to man through Jesus, the Son of God. Furthermore, He has done so **in these last days**, not the “end times,” but, given the context of Hebrews, at this new stage in God’s program that has been inaugurated by the New Covenant (see the expression “days are coming” in Jer 31:31).

### The Supporting Assertion About the Son’s Greatness (Heb 1:2b-3)

These verses depict the greatness of the Son’s person and accomplishments, which serve to underscore the importance of that which God has now revealed through Him. First, the author mentions the Son’s appointment as **heir of all things**. This speaks of the Son’s destiny, when in His future reign as King, He will receive His inheritance of a world-wide dominion (see Gen 1:26; Ps 72:8-

11). The author is alluding to Psalm 2 (note Heb 1:5), which unites the thought of God's Son being King (Ps 2:6) with His inheritance of the nations (Ps 2:8). The OT anticipated that the kingdom would be given to the Son-Messiah (2 Sam 7:11-16; Isa 2:1-4; Dan 7:13-14). This destiny will be fully realized at His Second Coming (see Heb 1:6; 2:5; 9:28; 12:28). The Son's destiny also has profound implications for the readers, namely that those who faithfully endure with Christ will share in His inheritance and be rewarded.

Second, he mentions the Son's role in creation, **through whom he created the world** (see John 1:3; 1:10; Col 1:16). In contrast to His kingly role in the future, this looks to the distant past and His greatness "in the beginning." Since He is our Creator, He is entitled to be King and to demand our allegiance.

Third, He points out the Son's *nature* as God, being **the radiance of His glory and the representation of his essence**. The word *representation* translates the Greek word *charaktēr*, meaning a faithful representation (of God). The words *of His essence* translate the Greek word *hupostaseōs*, which stresses one's real being (what he fundamentally is). Together, these boldly state the Son's deity—He bears the glory of God and faithfully depicts His essence.

Fourth, not only is the Son the original Creator, but He currently **sustains** this creation by His all-powerful word. Believers should obey His word (which is so powerful), and they can be assured of His ability to sustain them as they go through trials (see Heb 2:18).

Fifth, he points out the Son's atoning work for mankind, **cleansing for sins**. This looks to the Son's priestly work, in which He Himself became the very sacrifice that made purification from sins possible. This opening paragraph shows the Son to be both King and Priest, a combination that will be emphasized again in the epistle (see Heb 5:5-6). Since the purification of sins is complete, the Son has **sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high**, an obvious allusion to Psalm 110 (see Heb 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). In contrast to Old Covenant priests, He can sit down now that His priestly work is finished. Consequently He was given a place of supreme authority and highest honor at the time of His resurrection and ascension (see 1 Kgs 2:19).

## **The Conclusion to the Prologue (Heb 1:4)**

The mention of **angels** links verse 4 with Hebrews 1:5-14. By tradition, angels were mediators in the giving of the Old Covenant (Heb 2:2; see Acts 7:53; Gal

3:19). The superiority of the Son over angels confirms that the revelation of the New Covenant is superior to and replaces that of the Old Covenant. Though the Son has always been superior to the angels, the author indicates that He **became so far better than the angels**. With the completion of His redemptive work and His resurrection and exaltation to the Father's right hand, He has entered into the far superior role that the **superior name** of Son signifies.



## 8

## The Son's Superiority to the Angels who Mediated the Old Covenant Revelation (Heb 1:5–2:18)

The comparison with angels is the central concern of this whole section, though the author will pause in Hebrews 2:1-4 to exhort the readers.

### The Son's superiority to the angels proven (Heb 1:5-14)

In the remainder of chapter 1, the author gives a rapid-fire quotation of seven passages from the OT to substantiate the Son's superiority over the angels.

#### *Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14 (Heb 1:5)*

**Hebrews 1:5.** The author begins by linking Psalm 2:7 with 2 Samuel 7:14. The latter was one of the most crucial messianic verses in the OT, promising David that one of his descendants would eventually have an eternal throne-kingdom. This is called the Davidic Covenant. Psalm 2 is a highly messianic psalm written by David (note Acts 4:25-26), in which he envisions the fulfillment of the promises that had been made to him. Although earthly rulers have purposed to rebel against God's "Anointed One" (i.e., the Messiah), nevertheless God will install Him as King on the heavenly Mt. Zion, far above all (see Ps 2:6 with Heb 12:22). Thus, the promise in 2 Samuel 7:14 that the Davidic king would be **my son** finds its ultimate fulfillment in Messiah Jesus, the Son *par excellence*. The author's main point is that this title "**my son**" was never given to any angel.

But when was the Messiah **fathered**? In Ancient Near Eastern thought, when a god elevated a person to kingship, the king assumed the status of being the deity's "first-born." This analogy is applied to the Messiah in Psalm 89:3-4; 89:26-27. Therefore, this has nothing to do with physical birth or origin, but the time of coronation. The time of this begetting is **Today**, that unique occasion when the Messiah is elevated to the status of Davidic King. Note that

Acts 13:33 connects Psalm 2:7 with the resurrection of Jesus. By His resurrection and ascension to the Father's right hand, Jesus has been declared "the Son of God" (see Rom 1:3-4), though He must await the Second Coming for the formal inauguration of His kingdom. Lastly, we should also note that Psalm 2 goes on to speak of Messiah's inheritance, "You have only to ask me, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance" (Ps 2:8). This is the basis by which the author can say that the Son has been "appointed heir of all things" (Heb 1:2). Clearly, no angel ever attained the honor that this Davidic Son has.

***Ps 97:7 (Heb 1:6)***

**Hebrews 1:6.** The source for this quotation is debated, but most likely it is drawn from the Septuagint text of Psalm 97:7. Psalm 97 is one of several *enthronement psalms* that look forward to the Lord's universal rule over the nations (note esp. Ps 96:13). The words **when He again brings** suggest that the author is thinking of the Second Coming event. The author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 97, because it contrasts the Son's reception at the Second Coming with the role the angels will have. The Son will be welcomed as the universal King, whereas angels will assist Him and worship before Him (see Matt 24:30-31; Rev 19:6; 19:14). It is important to note that from the outset of the book, the author is thinking of our Lord's return, an event having important implications for believers (*viz.*, rewards are in store for the faithful).

***Psalm 104:4 and Psalm 45:6-7 (Heb 1:7-9)***

**Hebrews 1:7.** In light of the Hebrew parallelism of Psalm 104:4, the first quotation is better translated "Who makes His angels **winds**" (so NIV and NASB) rather than "Who makes His angels *spirits*" (as in the NET Bible and NKJV). Like the wind and like a flame of fire, the angels are transitory. The Greek text suggests that verses 7 and 8 of Hebrews 1 are meant to be contrasted. Thus, in contrast to the Son's eternal throne (Heb 1:8), the angels have merely temporal roles to play as God's messengers (the Heb word translated "angel" basically means "messenger").

**Hebrews 1:8-9.** Psalm 45:6 indicates that this eternal throne is for **God** (Heb *Elōhîm*), yet the author ascribes it to the Son. This verse not only points out the eternal nature of the dominion exercised by the Son, but sharpens the contrast to angels by pointing out that the Son rules as God. Apparently the

author of Hebrews extends the quotation to include Psalm 45:7, because of its mention of the king's **companions** (Gk *metochous*), a term he later applies to believers who participate in the heavenly calling to the New Jerusalem of the New Covenant (see Heb 3:1).

**d. Psalm 102:25-27 (Heb 1:10-12)**

**Hebrews 1:10-12.** Not even the creation itself is eternal, but the Son is. As Creator, He existed before the creation (v 10), and He will outlast it. In contrast to the eternal Son (whose **years will never run out**), the present creation is likened to an old outer **garment** to be **changed**. Yet when the present creation is destroyed, His kingdom will not be shaken (see Hebrews 12:27). He is the Creator of all, whereas the angels were created.

**e. Psalm 110:1 (Heb 1:13)**

**Hebrews 1:13.** The seventh and final quotation is drawn from Psalm 110:1, a prominent verse in the epistle (see Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). No angel was ever invited to sit at the Father's **right hand**, but the Son now sits in this exalted position.

**f. Conclusion to Heb 1:5-14**

**Hebrews 1:14.** The author concludes by pointing out that the angels are **ministering spirits** (v 7 in view). Unlike the Son whose destiny is King over an eternal throne-kingdom, the role of the angels is to minister, not reign. In fact, they minister to **those who will inherit salvation**. By *salvation*, our author is thinking not of our Lord's saving work on the Cross, but of a *future salvation* associated with His Second Coming (note the emphasis on the Second Coming in chapter 1). This is quite clear in light of his use of "salvation" in Hebrews 9:28, as well as his explicit mention in Hebrews 2:5 that he is speaking to the readers in regard to "the world to come." Although there is a salvation for believers to inherit, this can be jeopardized by their neglect (Heb 2:3). Thus, the author will pause in Hebrews 2:1-4 to warn his readers before continuing the discussion of the Son's superiority to angels.

## The first warning—not to neglect our future salvation (Heb 2:1-4)

The word **Therefore** in Hebrews 2:1 connects this paragraph with chapter 1. Before continuing the discussion about angels, the author pauses to warn his readers of the failure to heed the superior revelation through the Son.

### The danger of failing to heed (Heb 2:1)

**Hebrews 2:1.** In earlier times, God spoke at Mt. Sinai when the Old Covenant was given. Now God has spoken through the Son who has established the New Covenant. Thus believers must **pay closer attention** to these things (i.e., the revelation associated with the New Covenant), knowing they have the potential to **drift away** (Gk verb root *pararreō*). This verb (used only here in the NT) has the idea of something drifting by, as though it were being carried away by flowing water. The Greek translation (LXX) of Proverbs 3:21 uses this verb in reference to someone gradually departing from or losing sight of God's wisdom. This suggests that the fundamental nuance is of a gradual departure rather than an abrupt one. Nothing in the context suggests that unbelievers are in view, or that the danger is one of rejecting the offer of the gospel. Rather, true believers (note that the author includes himself) are capable of departing from what God has revealed through the New Covenant. Knowing that some of his audience had already become “sluggish in hearing” (Heb 5:11), he warns these believers that a subtle drift in their relationship with the Lord can lead to disaster in the Christian life (though the danger does not appear to be loss of personal salvation).

### The analogy to recompense under the Old Covenant (Heb 2:2-3)

**Hebrews 2:2.** The **message spoken through angels** refers to the Mosaic Law that was given at Sinai, which Law angels were involved in mediating (see Acts 7:38; Gal 3:19). Under this Old Covenant administration, “curses” (divine discipline) were given for disobedience (see Deut 28:15-68; Lev 26:1-46). These were primarily temporal in nature, and could be experienced by true believers. The word translated **penalty** is the Greek noun *misthapodosia*, meaning “recompense” when used in an unfavorable context, as it is here. The point is that under the Law, every violation had its own recompense (a negative consequence or penalty).

**Hebrews 2:3a.** The author deduces that if even the Old Covenant mediated by angels had its consequences (or discipline) for disobedience, certainly the superior New Covenant brought in by God's Son would have even more severe consequences for those who disobey it. The believer who drifts away from Jesus and the New Covenant should stop to consider that he cannot **escape** the consequences of such a choice. The author does not state what these consequences might be, though he will have more to say later about God's discipline for the believer (in chapter 12). To **neglect** (Gk verb *ameleō*) means to be careless or cease to be concerned about something (see Jer 38:32 in LXX = Jer 31:32 in Eng). [The reader should be aware that the verse numbering in both the Greek LXX and the Hebrew text often differs from that in our Bible translations today]. Yet the object of neglect is **such a great salvation**. The word salvation (Gk *sōtēria*) is not limited in meaning to what occurs at the moment of initial faith in Christ, but sometimes focuses on the climactic aspect that takes place at the Lord's Second Coming. It is used this way, for instance, in Hebrews 9:28 (see Rom 13:11; 1 Pet 1:5). The reference in Hebrews 1:14 to “inheriting salvation” and in Hebrews 2:5 to “the world to come” confirm that the author is thinking of this eschatological sense of the word.

Our Lord began His ministry by proclaiming “the kingdom of God” that was near (Matt 4:17), though He later revealed that it would not be fully inaugurated until His return (see Matt 25:31; 25:34; Luke 21:31). Thus, to neglect “such a great salvation” does not mean a rejection of the gospel, but rather a failure to properly care about the future aspect of our salvation connected with our Lord's Second Coming and kingdom. Later in the epistle he will clarify how this neglect takes place. Believers can do this by failing to endure in their Christian walk, by abandoning their confession of the Lord Jesus, and by failing to live by faith. For these Jewish believers, this might be accompanied by a retreat into some form of Judaism and its system of animal sacrifices.

### **A reinforcement to the author's argument (Heb 2:3b-4)**

**Hebrews 2:3b-4.** The author reminds the readers that God's program of salvation culminating in the kingdom has been confirmed to them by **those who heard him** personally, and was further authenticated by the display of supernatural **miracles** and **gifts of the Holy Spirit**. [Note the emphasis elsewhere placed upon apostles in these miraculous manifestations—Acts

4:33; 5:12; 14:3; 2 Cor 12:12]. The readers had ample evidence to put them on a solid course: believing in Jesus as the Christ, His kingdom teachings, and this new calling unto the New Covenant that replaces the Old.

## **Reasons the Son was briefly lower than the angels (Heb 2:5-18)**

Following the warning of Hebrews 2:1-4, the author now continues his comparison of the Son with angels. Though the Son is clearly superior to angels (1:5-14), it was necessary for Him to be temporarily made lower than the angels (i.e., to become incarnate), in order to accomplish important things for man.

### **To fulfill the dominion promise of Genesis 1 (Heb 2:5-9)**

**Hebrews 2:5.** In verses 5-9 the author reflects on God's original plan for man, namely, for him to have dominion over His entire created order (see Gen 1:26-28). Though the fall of man in Genesis 3 undermined that plan, God will yet fulfill this in the future kingdom of the Lord Jesus, which the author designates **the world to come**. [The Greek term for “world,” *oikoumenē*, is used in Psalm 93:1 and Psalm 96:10 in the context of the Lord's eschatological reign]. This kingdom was not given to angels but to the Son to reign over (a further proof of His superiority to angels). This kingdom is the same as that already introduced in chapter 1 (e.g., Heb 1:8) in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant promise of an eternal throne and kingdom (Heb 1:5).

**Hebrews 2:6-8a.** The author appeals to Psalm 8:4-6, in which David reflects on the dominion promise of Genesis 1. The psalmist marveled that God would honor lowly man (made **lower than the angels**) so highly by entrusting the rule of His created order to him. In doing so, God had **crowned him with glory and honor**. The psalm itself states that God's intention was to put **all things under his control** (Heb 2:8), and the author of Hebrews underscores this point by stating, **He left nothing outside of his control**. Though this psalm originally referred to the first Adam, the author of Hebrews finds its fulfillment in the last Adam, Jesus Christ.

**Hebrews 2:8b-9.** The problem is that this divine intention was not fully fulfilled in mankind, due to Adam's sin. In fact, man himself became a slave to sin and subject to the assaults of Satan and his demonic forces. Also,

“death” still holds sway over man and keeps him in bondage (locked in fear). For this reason the author adds, **At present we do not yet see ALL THINGS under his control.** Mankind does not have complete dominion over creation.

This paves the way for the promise to be fulfilled in Jesus, who has been appointed heir of all things (Heb 1:2). By His incarnation, He has joined the ranks of mankind as **lower than the angels for a little while**, and is thus a qualified candidate to exercise dominion over God's created order. Though He waits for His enemies to be completely subdued before His formal inauguration as king (Heb 1:13), He is already **crowned with glory and honor**. Mankind is crowned with glory and honor by virtue of his God-given privilege (that of ruling), but this promise from Psalm 8:5 comes to have a more significant fulfillment in Jesus. He has been resurrected and exalted to the right hand of the Father (see Heb 1:3), and from that position He exercises authority over everything (see Matt 28:18).

Jesus' incarnation also gives Him the opportunity to suffer on the Cross and so **experience death on behalf of everyone** (a topic the author will take up in verses 10-18). Thus because **we see Jesus** in His suffering and work of redemption, we can have hope as we await His coming kingdom. This hope is founded on His resurrection, which ensures that His atoning work was successfully completed.

### **To suffer for the many sons He is bringing to glory (Heb 2:10-18)**

**Hebrews 2:10.** Verse 10 highlights three ways in which the Son's sufferings uniquely benefit believers. First, the words **all things** recall verse 8 and that which man was originally to have dominion over. The Father has granted the “dominion rights” to Jesus Christ and (in turn) to those who follow Him and “inherit salvation” (recall Heb 1:14).

Second, just as the Son passed through His sufferings to arrive at glory, so the Father is at work in **bringing many sons to glory**. The word *glory* recalls Psalm 8 again (see Heb 2:7) and how Christ experienced glory in resurrection and exaltation. To bring many sons to glory looks at the affirmation of God's plan for believers to also share in glory as Christ Himself did after successfully completing His earthly pilgrimage. Because of their faith in Him, they will eventually receive the glory of resurrection and (if they do not neglect the “so

great a salvation”) a sharing in the glorious reign and dominion of the Son. Obviously the latter privilege is conditional in light of Hebrews 2:1-4 (see Heb 4:1ff).

Third, the Father made **the pioneer of their salvation** perfect through sufferings. The word *pioneer* (Greek *archēgos*) basically means leader, and therefore His mission is to lead us (or, safely guide us, pioneering the way) to this future eschatological salvation that awaits us. In this context, “salvation” should be understood the same way as in Heb 1:14 and Heb 2:3. Just as He Himself had to pass through sufferings, so we too must do so on our earthly pilgrimage that leads to His kingdom. The verb **make perfect** is from the Greek verb *teleioō*, meaning to bring something to its goal. Jesus was not made more holy (He was eternally sinless). Rather, His endurance of sufferings served to complete the goal for Him to experientially learn obedience to the Father (see Heb 5:8).

**Hebrews 2:11.** The words **makes holy** (Greek *hagiazō*, to set apart) in this context and in light of Heb 10:10 refer not to progressive sanctification, but to the believer being set apart once for all by the atoning work of Christ (i.e., positional sanctification). [This is referred to as justification in Paul's epistles]. As Christ is the leader of our salvation, we share a deep intimacy with Him. He has sanctified us (offering His body as our sacrifice), and we are sanctified. Therefore, He unashamedly views us as **brothers and sisters** [lit., “brethren”].

**Hebrews 2:12-13.** The author quotes two passages from the Greek Septuagint version of the OT to support this concept of being Christ's *brethren*. The first is from Psalm 22:22, in which David's experience *typifies* the experience of Messiah (both are “king” over their congregation). The second is from Isaiah 8:17-18. In a time when the nation was turning from the Lord and resorting to Assyria for help, Isaiah put his trust in the Lord (v 17) along with his disciples (“the children” of v 18). In doing so, they *typify* the Lord Jesus (who trusted the Father) and the disciples (Jesus' “children”) who have followed Him in faith.

**Hebrews 2:14-16.** These verses state very positively what Christ has done for His brethren. He has annulled the power of **the devil**, the one who had **the power of death**, and in so doing has delivered us from **the fear of death**. Man was created by God to rule (have dominion)—as Psalm 8 highlighted—but ironically became paralyzed through the fear of death. Satan's plot to get man



to sin and thus suffer death was used to bludgeon humanity with fear. The death of Christ removes this fear, because His resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of the Father assures us of our own ultimate resurrection. Yet this **concern** (Christ's death that *aids* sinners) is of no benefit to angels, but only humans (those who share in flesh and blood). Christ's atonement does not apply to angels but rather to Abraham's descendants, i.e., those who are the spiritual seed of Abraham by faith in Christ (see Gal 3:7).

**Hebrews 2:17-18.** The final two verses of the chapter depict the Son as a **merciful and faithful high priest**, ready to **help** believers **who are tempted**. His incarnation in order to **make atonement** for sins also exposed Him to the realm of human temptation, as He learned experientially what we go through. In particular, He experienced firsthand the temptation of giving up and turning away from the living God. Because He remained faithful, however, He knows what it takes to endure and can thus help us do the same. The mention of **High Priest** in verse 17 (first of many occurrences in Hebrews) serves to prepare us for what lies ahead, namely, the role of Christ as a high priest. If we are to be successful in our earthly pilgrimage and receive a full inheritance in our eschatological salvation, we will need the help of this High Priest. In this role, He is both merciful and faithful, and focuses all of His attention on aiding us in trials and temptations in order to bring us to glory.

Perhaps the most Christ-exalting book of the New Testament, the anonymous Epistle to the Hebrews nevertheless raises enormous theological questions. Peppared with “warning passages,” readers are exhorted to steadfastly pursue their Christian pilgrimage rather than abandoning their confession of Christ. The author reminds them that they can do this—despite the trials and challenges they face—by a faith that endures through all the difficulties. Those who faithfully heed the call will ultimately be rewarded in the kingdom of God and jointly reign with Christ.



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