

Faith That Endures

A Practical Commentary
on the Book of Hebrews

J. Dwight Pentecost

with devotional notes
by Ken Durham

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Faith That Endures: A Practical Commentary on the Book of Hebrews

by J. Dwight Pentecost; devotional notes by Ken Durham

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Preface

The path of the godly person has never been easy. It is a way beset with trials, tests, difficulties, and opposition. Saints in the Old Testament found this to be true. Old Testament believers such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Joshua, David, Jeremiah, and Daniel all were called on to suffer for the sake of righteousness. The Lord Himself warned, "In the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). He promised that those who belong to Him would experience the same opposition and rejection that He Himself endured (John 15:18–25). The book of Acts records the first fulfillment of the Lord's warning in the lives of His witnesses; as long as believers are in this world, we also may experience such suffering.

It becomes evident from a study of the epistle to the Hebrews that the recipients of this "word of exhortation" (Heb. 13:22) were undergoing serious testing. The author recognizes that this is not only the common lot of believers, but also that it is inescapable as long as we are in this world. Consequently, those who were suffering needed help to cope with these experiences; that help is what the author sought to give through this letter.

While it might have been expected that the writer would rebuke them for their fears and for the weakness of their faith, he instead exhorts his readers to patiently endure in the life of faith they had previously known. He does this by showing them the superiority of the revelation from God that they had received through His Son. He shows that they have a merciful and faithful Priest who is ministering on their behalf, whose position is based on a covenant superior to the covenant on which the Old Testament priests ministered, whose ministry is based on a better sacrifice

than those of the Levitical system, and who ministers in a better sanctuary than the one in which Aaron ministered.

Since the Old Testament saints lived by faith (Heb. 11), the readers of this letter are called on to live by faith in the midst of their circumstances and to exhibit patient endurance as their predecessors did. These exhortations are coupled with warnings about what they would forfeit if they did not continue to walk by faith in patient endurance—not the loss of salvation, but the loss of the blessings that flow from that salvation.

While the details of our lives may differ from those common to the people to whom this epistle was written, the general conditions under which we live are the same. We live in a hostile, unredeemed world, in an unredeemed body, with an unredeemed nature within us. Because we belong to Christ, we are targets of the Enemy's attacks. The flesh can grow weary in the conflict. The confidence of faith may give way to weakening doubts. Therefore we need encouragement to fight the good fight of faith, to continue to walk by faith, to manifest patient endurance in every trial or test, to live in light of the hope set before us rather than in light of present circumstances.

The help the author of Hebrews gave to those in circumstances similar to ours will provide the help we need to live victoriously by faith. His exhortations to patiently endure and his warnings against moving backward in our spiritual experience are still valid. They show us the importance of walking by faith.

This book, then, is one of the most significant in all the New Testament for strengthening and guiding believers into a life of faith. We cannot seriously study this book and apply its truths without maturing both in a knowledge of the truth and in a walk that pleases the One who has called us to a life of faith.

—J. DWIGHT PENTECOST

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Jesus Christ Is Superior to the Angels

I. God's Revelation Through Jesus Christ is Superior to His Revelation Through Angels (1:1–2:18).

When God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, there was no barrier to their fellowship with Him. While all creation bore testimony to God's existence and to the exceeding greatness of His power, Adam and Eve grew in their knowledge of God through intimate fellowship with Him. God's daily walk with them in the garden (Gen. 3:8) involved a continuous revelation of Himself to them. Thus as they enjoyed fellowship with Him, they grew in their knowledge of Him.

However, after Adam and Eve's willful act of disobedience (Gen. 3:1–6), it was no longer possible for God to come to walk with them and reveal Himself to them. Therefore their knowledge of the Creator became dependent on His revelation of Himself

Anyone who has ever worked with tools or kitchen utensils knows that each one was designed for a specific purpose or task. If we try to use them for something other than that specific purpose, we will face frustration and possibly even damage the instrument. This reference to the early chapters of Genesis reminds us that God created human life for a specific purpose—to know Him and to enjoy fellowship with Him. And to employ that life—our own lives—for anything other than that overriding purpose will only result in frustration, possibly even a broken life. Although knowing Christ certainly equips us to pursue pleasure, wealth, success, or other tempting goals better than we ever could before, let's not forget that our purpose for existence today is the same as it's always been: to know Him.

through nature. The light of God's personal presence gave way to spiritual darkness, and the knowledge of God they had gained through intimate fellowship with Him gave way to progressive spiritual ignorance.

This is why Paul testified that people are characterized not by light, but by darkness (Rom. 1:21–23; Eph. 4:17–18). This darkness is ignorance of God. Paul further testified that “the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). And again, “The world through wisdom did not know God” (1 Cor. 1:21). In other words, if people come to any knowledge of God, it is not by the exercise of their fallen intellects. Rather, it comes through divine revelation. Fortunately for us, our God has not chosen to hide Himself from the human race, but has acted to reveal Himself through special revelation, that we might come to know Him.

A. God's Revelation Through the Son (1:1–2a).

1 God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,

2a has in these last days spoken to us by His Son,

In the introduction to his epistle, the writer of Hebrews affirms the great fact that God has indeed revealed Himself to us. Reviewing all of human history, the author declares that in time past God has spoken to the fathers by the prophets. That revelation was not given directly, but indirectly; for while the fathers were recipients of direct revelation, that revelation came to them through the prophets. Moreover, that revelation was given at various times and in different ways. While the author affirms that throughout the Old Testament there was a progressive revelation from God through the prophets to people, he also views this revelation as incomplete. Old Testament revelation anticipated a fuller revelation yet to come. Specifically, Old Testament revelation looked forward to New Testament revelation. And as we well know, there are notable contrasts between the two

concerning the time of revelation, the agents in revelation, and the methods of revelation.

The Old Testament prophet was unique in that he was the one through whom God was revealing Himself to His people. Therefore there were various methods by which God gave revelation to the prophets. On frequent occasions, God gave revelation directly to the recipients. Abraham, for example, received direct revelation from God as God appeared to him (Gen. 12:1; Acts 7:2). Moses also received direct communication from God (Exod. 33:9, 11; 34:1). Isaiah received a word from the Lord (Isa. 8:11; 31:4). Jeremiah received direct communication from God (Jer. 1:4–10). On countless occasions the word of the Lord came directly to Jeremiah, and Ezekiel likewise received word directly from the Lord (Ezek. 1:3; 2:1; 3:22). Whenever it pleased Him, then, God could give direct revelation to the prophets, who then communicated His word to the people.

In Numbers 12:6 God revealed that He would speak to the prophets through dreams and through visions. In revelation through a dream, the recipient was asleep and in the dream received direct revelation. Such was the experience of Jacob (Gen. 28:11–16), Joseph (Gen. 37:5–9), Pharaoh (Genesis 41), the Midianite (Judg. 7:13–15), Solomon (1 Kings 3:5–15), Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:1; 4:5), and Daniel (Dan. 7:1). As with all true revelation, that which was delivered to the recipient through a dream was trustworthy and authenticated; it revealed God's infallible plan or purpose to the people through the one who received that revelation.

Many modern "gurus" claim to know a lot about God, yet they have nothing more upon which to base their assumptions than their own opinions or the ideas of others. The Bible, on the other hand, claims to be the one source of God's own revelation about Himself to mankind. This makes it unique above all other books and holy writings of history—and unique in our world today. Although using the Bible to witness to unbelievers and to counter false teachers is not as popular today as it once was, it still is the only source for final, definitive, authoritative, supernatural truth. Dedicate yourself to studying it and committing it to memory, and you will never be without an answer for the one who asks.

In revelation through a vision, the recipient was wide awake and often became an actual participant in the event that was being revealed. Such was the experience of Abraham (Gen. 15:1) and Samuel (1 Sam. 3:11–15). Ezekiel frequently was given revelation through visions (Ezek. 1:1; 8:3; 40:2; 44:3). Daniel received revelation through visions (Dan. 8:1; 9:24–27; 10:1–7). Hosea likewise received revelation in this way (Hos. 12:10), as did Nahum (Nah. 1:1). Such also was the experience of Habakkuk (Hab. 2:2–3), while Zechariah received details of the prophetic program for Israel through eight night visions (Zech. 1:7–6:15). Again, revelation given through visions was considered authoritative and trustworthy, and it was viewed as God’s revelation to His people.

Sometimes God’s revelation was accompanied by storm and fire, as in the experience of Moses (Exod. 19:19; Deut. 5:22). In other instances revelation came through a still, small voice, as in the experience of Elijah (1 Kings 19:12). But even though God’s revelation to man spanned all of Old Testament history—from the time of Abraham to the days of Malachi—and even though God gave His revelation sometimes directly, sometimes through dreams, and sometimes through visions, it all was God’s revelation of Himself, His plan, and His program. It all was considered authoritative and trustworthy, and through that revelation people could come to a personal, intimate knowledge of God and of God’s program.

However, all of that revelation also was considered temporary.

How do we know whether someone has really received direct revelation when they say, “God told me this,” or “Thus says the Lord”? First, in the Old Testament, God’s revelation was authenticated by infallibility (never being wrong or unfulfilled) and by verifiable miracles. In other words, God’s message through His messenger always was confirmed by events that could not be refuted or “debunked.” No tricks, no gimmicks, no counterfeits. Second, these first few verses of Hebrews seem to indicate that the revealing God did in the Old Testament through prophets, dreams, and visions has been replaced by a superior revelation through His Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore we should be extremely wary today of anyone who claims to receive direct revelation from God. And if what they claim is not consistent with what God has revealed in Scripture, we should stay as far away as possible!

Because it anticipated a full and complete revelation to come (Deut. 18:15), it was incomplete. Thus the writer of Hebrews declares, "God . . . has in these last days spoken to us by His Son."

This reference to "last days" puts God's new revelation in sharp contrast to the revelation He had previously given through the prophets. This later revelation is complete rather than incomplete, permanent rather than temporary, and is the realization of all that was anticipated in His former revelation. The great fact the author presents here is that this new revelation does not follow a pattern of former revelation. Rather, it is God's revelation through a new method, the Incarnation.

In our English translation, we read that God has spoken to us "by His Son." Notice, however, that in some versions the word *His* is in italics, signifying that it was not in the original Greek text. The English reading "by His Son" puts emphasis on the Person through whom revelation is made; however, if we read the text literally, without that insertion, it tells us that God "has spoken to us by Son." This emphasizes the method rather than the person. And while it is certainly true that God's revelation was made through the person of the Son, here the writer wants to emphasize the new method by which the revelation was made—the great fact of Christ's incarnation.

John, in the introduction to his gospel, points out that the world was in darkness (John 1:5), which to John meant ignorance of God. In that darkness, men did not and could not know God (1 Cor. 1:21). The only way men could know God was through revelation. Therefore this revelation was given as "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

How much do we really know about the Son, Jesus Christ? How much do we study Him and His nature in our churches and Sunday school classes? If someone asks us about Jesus, how much can we tell them? The Bible tells us that Jesus is the fullest, most complete, most accurate, and convincing revelation of God ever given. To know more about Him is to know more about the Father. To understand Christ and His ministry is to understand God and to understand what He is doing in our lives today.

This revelation through the Son is not viewed by the writer of Hebrews as simply another in progressive forms of revelation; rather, it is God's ultimate and climactic revelation of Himself in the Son.

B. The Position of the Son (1:2b–3).

2b whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Since God's new and ultimate revelation is Son-revelation, emphasis is placed not so much on what the Son said as upon who He is. Because through the incarnation God became flesh, and because the Son is God, the Son—apart from anything He said—is the revelation of God to people. Therefore the writer of Hebrews shows the Son's eligibility to be Son-revelation by stating seven significant facts concerning Him who became incarnate Deity.

The first stated fact is that God has appointed the Son as heir of all things (1:2b). This appointment as heir specifically concerns an appointment to authority. When Jacob gave Joseph the coat of many colors (Gen. 37:3), he was assigning administrative authority in the family to Joseph and was designating him as his heir. It was because of this appointment that Joseph was to rule over his brothers.

In the same way, God the Father has designated the Son as His

If it is true that Jesus Christ is God's ultimate revelation of Himself to people, then any so-called understanding of God that is inconsistent with all that we know about Jesus Christ is incomplete or in error. This leaves religions like the New Age movement, Eastern mysticism, humanism and the various cults far short of the truth they profess to teach. Remember, the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is not just another form of revelation; He is God's final and ultimate revelation of Himself to people.

heir and has placed Him in a position of authority over “all things.” This encompasses the entire universe and all that will ever develop in that realm. And because God is the Creator and He alone has the right to rule, the One to whom rulership is assigned can be nothing less than God Himself. Moreover, this appointment to an inheritance was not temporary; it is timeless. It is because of this appointment that eventually “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10–11).

The second statement is: “. . . through whom also He made the worlds” (Heb. 1:2c). A better translation of this phrase would be “He ordered the ages.” Although the English word “world” seemingly refers to the creation of the physical universe—which is certainly true (John 1:3; Col. 1:16)—the specific word used here actually refers to all the ages of time that will ever unfold within the universe. Because the Son ordered and controls all history throughout its successive time periods, all that develops within history follows a divinely ordered arrangement over which the Son is sovereign administrator.

The third statement affirms that the Son is “the brightness of His glory” (1:3a). Because it does not say that the Son became the brightness of His glory, but rather states that the Son has existed eternally in continuous unbroken fellowship with the Father, this emphasizes the eternality of the Son. The word brightness means to radiate, to flash forth, or to cause to shine, stressing here that the Father’s glory which Christ revealed was not a mere reflected glory. Rather, it was the shining forth of Christ’s inherent glory, which itself was the glory of His Father. This emphasizes the oneness of the Son with His Father.

Since Jesus Christ is the ultimate heir of all things—including us—it seems ridiculous to think that we can rebel against His authority or hide from our accountability to Him! One way to cultivate our submission to Him is by spending time in His Word daily and consciously practicing Christian obedience. Remember, one day all things—either willingly or unwillingly—will be subject to His authority.

God's glory refers to that in Himself in which He can take justifiable pride, in which He can find delight. God glories in the perfections of His person, in the attributes that are a manifestation of His character. Therefore we learn that God the Father can find delight in God the Son, because everything in Himself in which He delights is in His Son as well.

The fourth statement is that the Son is "the express image of His person" (1:3b). This emphasizes that the Son in Himself is a full and perfect revelation of what is in the Father. Even though we have not seen the Father, we know the Father because all that is in the Father is in the Son.

In the Greco-Roman world, coins bore the image of the emperor. Because the image of the emperor had been impressed on the coin by a die, by looking at a coin one could recognize the emperor. And though the likeness of the emperor on the coin was only a representative likeness, if the die were cast away, one could determine exactly what was in the die by studying the coin. Why? Because the die reproduced itself in every detail on the coin.

This is the essence of the word the author chose here to show the relationship between the Son and the Father. While we do not see the Father, all that is in the Father is in the Son. By studying the Son we learn of the Father. Just as an impression on a coin becomes an expression of the die, so what was in Christ is a revelation of the Father.

The fifth statement affirms that the Son is "upholding all things by the word of His power" (1:3c). This statement implies first that this creation is sustained and kept in its creative order by the power that belongs to the Son. But the statement implies far more.

If the turmoil, uncertainty, and increasing evil of today's world troubles us, we can take comfort that Jesus Christ Himself has created all the ages of time that will ever pass on this earth, and He is in perfect control of the events that take place within them. This outlook is quite different from the environmentalist philosophy that proposes that human beings have it within themselves to destroy or "save" the earth. According to Scripture, human history is unfolding just as our Lord has known from eternity past that it would.

The word upholding has in it the idea of carrying something along to a designated end. Not only is the Son the One who was the architect of the ages, He is also the One who through the ages has been carrying creation to its designated end. He does this not by the exertion of physical strength but rather “by the word of His power.” This word has in it the idea of an authoritative command that is consequently executed, implying the exercise of His will that is carrying all things to their predetermined end.

Through the sixth statement, “He had by Himself purged our sins” (1:3d), the author is looking at the redemptive work of the Son. Through this work the Son has made a revelation of God’s unprecedented love, grace, justice, holiness, and righteousness. This in fact will become a main theme of the epistle—the Son’s work to provide purification from sin. In His work He deals not only with personal sins, but with cleansing all creation from sin itself. This is viewed as a once-for-all purification which is adequate and complete, a work in which the Son alone was involved. It was a work He accomplished “by Himself.”

The seventh statement affirms that He “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (1:3e). The fact that He “sat down” signifies more than taking rest after labor. It is a solemn enthronement, the taking of a seat of honor and authority after the work He had come to do had been finished. Having completed the work of revelation and the work of redemption that were to have been accomplished during the Incarnation, He could then assume the position of honor and authority that was His from eternity past (John 17:5). And the fact that He is enthroned at the right hand does not so much signify geographical location as it does the dignity, the honor, and the glory that have been given to Him.

Of all the furniture in the temple, one item that was not present was a chair or couch on which the priests could sit. This was because their work of offering sacrifice for sin was never finished. In contrast, because the sacrifice Christ offered was perfect and complete, when His work was finished, He sat down at the right hand of God. Not only does this vividly show us that His work is complete, it also shows that when His sacrifice is applied to our sins, that payment is complete and perfect. We cannot add to it, we cannot improve on it, and we cannot lose it.

In these seven statements the writer makes it clear that the One whom God has sent to give ultimate revelation concerning Himself is fully qualified, not only to give revelation but to be revelation from God to people, so that anyone who is in darkness and ignorance of God might come to the light, the true knowledge of God.

In summary, the author of Hebrews teaches that throughout the course of Old Testament history God revealed Himself to the prophets—either directly or through dreams and visions—who in turn communicated that revelation to people. But to give the climactic and complete revelation of Himself, God devised a new method of revelation. That revelation was the incarnation of the Son, who came to reveal the Father. The Son revealed the Father not only by what He said, which also was revelation, but by what He is. Because He is one with the Father, the Lord could say of this revelation, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). People therefore are held responsible for this revelation in the Son.

C. The Son’s Superiority to Angels (1:4–14)

4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

5 For to which of the angels did He ever say: “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You”? And again: “I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son”?

6 But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: “Let all the angels of God worship Him.”

In today’s world of pseudo-spirituality, God-talk, and generic mysticism, the true measure of anyone’s relationship to God is their response to Jesus Christ as the Bible reveals Him. Though some cults and liberal churches will give lip service to a few of Christ’s statements or the “Jesus” they have defined in their own doctrine, once they are faced with Christ’s statements concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment, they begin to compromise their acceptance of Him as God in the flesh. Today, more than ever, the true test of a person’s view of God is the question, “What do you think of Jesus?” According to Hebrews, to reject Jesus Christ as the Bible reveals Him is to reject the one true God!

7 And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire."

8 But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom.

9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions."

10 And: "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands.

11 They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment;

12 Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not fail."

13 But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"?

14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

Throughout the Old Testament, God's revelation to mankind was frequently communicated through angels. Hagar received revelation from God through angels (Genesis 16), as did Abraham (Gen. 22:11–18). Jacob was visited by angels who brought revelation to him (Gen. 31:11–13), and the Angel of Jehovah brought revelation to Moses (Exod. 3:1–2). Balaam (Numbers 22), Gideon (Judges 6), and Manoah (Judges 13) all received revelation through angels. The prophet Elijah received a message from God through angels (1 Kings 17:2–4). Gabriel brought revelation to Daniel (Dan.

Although we are reminded daily of the celebrity and status of people who possess a certain amount of "power" in our society (politicians, stars, professional athletes), we are amazingly unimpressed with the sheer power of Jesus Christ. Anyone who has ever witnessed the unharnessed natural power of a hurricane, earthquake, volcano, or other natural catastrophe knows that the sensation is overwhelming; yet Jesus Christ holds together the entire universe in which those events are tiny details! Is this the kind of power in which we consciously place our trust during times of crisis? The scope of His power is far greater than any problem we might ever face.

10:11–12), and angels communicated revelation to Zechariah, the prophet (Zech. 1:9; 4:1–6).

What was true in the Old Testament was also true in the New Testament. Joseph received an announcement concerning the birth of Jesus from an angelic messenger (Matt. 1:20). The announcement concerning the birth of the promised forerunner, John the Baptist, was given by an angel to Zechariah (Luke 1:11–17). And the announcement of the conception of the promised Messiah was given to Mary through an angel (Luke 1:28–32).

While all of these revelations given to individuals were significant, the greatest revelation given to people through angels was the Law, which was revealed by angels to Moses at Sinai. Paul wrote concerning the Law, “It was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator” (Gal. 3:19). Israel considered all revelation given through angels to be authentic, trustworthy, and binding. However, special heed was paid to the Mosaic Law, because it was revealed directly by God to Moses, the mediator. For countless generations, the nation to whom the Law had been given held that Law in highest esteem and considered itself to be bound by the Law. If God’s people, then, were to put themselves under a new revelation from God, they would have to be shown that the new is superior to the old. The writer does this by showing that the new revelation came through a Person superior to the angels and to Moses, through whom the old revelation came.

In verses 4–14 the writer presents what could be viewed as a summary of Old Testament doctrine concerning angels. Rather than appealing to the innumerable Jewish traditions that had arisen

An interesting prophetic sidenote: When Jesus Christ returns to establish His millennial kingdom on this earth, He will redeem the creation itself from the effects of man’s sin at the Fall. In other words, He will bring environmental harmony to the earth for the first and only time since the fall. Yet, before Christ does return, Satan will attempt to counterfeit this messianic miracle by convincing the human race that it can “save the earth” through its own collective efforts. This is just one of many uniquely messianic feats Satan will attempt to counterfeit as Christ’s return draws near.

concerning the nature and function of angels, the apostle reviews the Old Testament Scriptures' teachings about the nature and ministry of angels. He does this to contrast angels with the Son, the authoritative administrator in the universe, the Architect of the ages, the One who carries all human history to its God-designed end.

While verse 3 emphasizes the eternal relationship of the Son to the Father, verse 4 now emphasizes the exalted position to which the God-man was appointed, evidently at the time of His resurrection. As we will see later in the epistle (5:5–6), at the time of the resurrection, the One who from eternity past had been appointed as heir now actively engaged in the administration of that inheritance. Because the administration given to the Son includes not only the physical universe but all created beings within God's creation, and because angels are a part of creation, the One in authority must be superior to all those over whom He exercises rule. Therefore the eternal Son clearly is superior to the angels.

To support his assertion that the Son is superior to angels, the writer of Hebrews appeals to seven passages from the Old Testament.

The first quotation (1:5a) is from Psalm 2:7, where a covenant given by the Father to the Son declares, "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You." Without doubt, the day referred to is the day of resurrection. The "begetting" does refer to the inception of the Son's existence, as though there was a time when the Son did not exist and then was brought into existence. Just as Jacob appointed Joseph to an authoritative position and Joseph became "the son" or "the heir" at that specific time, so at the specific time of the resurrection, God the Father established the positional right of the Son to rule. That is why Paul declared in Acts 13:33 that Psalm

Throughout the Old Testament, one of the characteristics of God's glory was that no manifestation of evil could stand before it. Similarly, the greater our understanding of the Son—who is the brightness of God's glory—the greater will be our distress before Him regarding our sin and uncleanness. Anyone hungry for a cleansed life will continually cultivate a greater understanding of Him and a closer relationship with Him.

2:7 was fulfilled by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. While some angels were appointed as “principalities and powers” (Eph. 1:21) and were assigned to rule in the angelic realm, none were ever called “sons.” This authority belongs exclusively to the resurrected One, Jesus Christ.

The second quotation (1:5b) is from 2 Samuel 7:14, a passage in which God makes a covenant with David. Here God affirms that there will be a continuing relationship between Himself and David’s descendant, and that through this descendant the covenant God made with David would be fulfilled. The emphasis in this passage is on the verb “I will be,” indicating a continual position of authority that will be given to that descendant. This positional authority is based on the relationship between the ultimate Son of David and His Father who gave the covenant. We see, then, that Jesus Christ, David’s greater Son, is the One through whom all of the Messianic promises concerning a kingdom, redemption, and blessing would be fulfilled.

In verse 6 the writer anticipates the second advent of Jesus Christ into this world subsequent to His resurrection by quoting a third Old Testament passage. In Deuteronomy 32:43 (quoted in the Septuagint version), it is foreseen that at Messiah’s return the angels of God will worship Him. The scene here is of the millennial reign of Christ on the earth in fulfillment of God’s Old Testament covenants. According to Hebrews 12:22–24, when Christ’s kingdom is instituted here on the earth, the unfallen angels will be a part of that kingdom dwelling with the Father and the Son. And along with the Old Testament saints and redeemed saints of this present age, they will be in the heavenly city, New Jerusalem, as worshipers. Certainly, therefore, He who is worshiped is superior

How much time do you spend studying the person of Jesus Christ? How much time does your church or Bible study spend teaching about the person, the work, the attributes, and the nature of Jesus Christ? If we truly want to draw near to God, and if Jesus Christ is the ultimate revelation of God, we will do well to spend our time learning about Him, talking to Him, walking with Him, obeying Him, and drawing ever closer to Him.

to those who worship Him! This quotation, then, emphasizes the future position of authority and dignity of the Son in His 1,000-year reign on the earth.

The fourth quotation, from Psalm 104:4, is found in verse 7. There the angels are referred to as spirits, and in ministry they are likened to flames of fire. Because angels are spirits, their ministry cannot be observed; and just as a flame is temporary and transitory, so the ministry of angels is periodic and temporal. Most important, here the author contrasts the unseen and temporary ministry of angels with the eternal character and ministry of the Son.

In the fifth quotation (1:8–9), another contrast between Christ and the angels is based on Psalm 45:6–7. Here the writer affirms the eternity of the Son and shows that every exercise of His administrative authority is in keeping with God's perfect righteousness. According to the Jewish tradition of that day, angels were created new every morning, and after they completed their daily ministry, they returned to the stream of fire from which they had been taken. This concept may have arisen from an interpretation of Psalm 104:4. Regardless, it is with stark contrast that the author emphasizes the eternity and the deity of the Son. Further, this anointing has set Him apart to the position of an administrator, since anointing in the Old Testament always had in view empowerment by the Holy Spirit to discharge a special

Because at least one cult today insists that Jesus Christ is not coeternal with the Father but was brought into existence at a point in time, it is important to understand this legal language of the ancient Near East. The bestowal or "begetting" of sonship rights as legal heir to all things possessed by one's father was a legal pronouncement, much like the naming of an heir or a legal successor in a will. It was at the point of the Resurrection that this prophetic pronouncement concerning the "son" of David was fulfilled—the point at which there was no further barrier to Messiah's legal right to inherit from the Father possession of all creation. Although we know from biblical prophecy that He will take possession of that inheritance in the future, His legal right to that inheritance was made sure by His victory over Satan at the Resurrection.

office or appointment. In Psalm 45, then, the Son is shown as anointed by the Father with the Spirit for the discharge of His office as earthly king. As we know from the gospels, at His baptism the Son was anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit to fill His messianic office in His earthly kingdom (Acts 10:38).

The sixth quotation is from Psalm 102:25–27 and is found in verses 10–12. Here the eternality of the One who is addressed as “Lord” is affirmed. He is the Creator of the universe, and while the universe is destined to pass away, the Creator remains. He is the eternal uncreated Son of the Father, in contrast to the angels who are created beings.

The seventh and final quotation, found in verse 13, is from Psalm 110:1. Again reference is made to the time of the resurrection when Christ was officially enthroned at His Father’s right hand. This enthronement was the Father’s answer to the Son’s petition on the eve of the crucifixion: “O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was” (John 17:5). Christ’s enthronement was the Father’s declaration of His acceptance of the Son and His satisfaction with the Son’s work. Moreover, Christ’s enthronement at the Father’s right hand anticipates His enthronement here on the earth following His second coming, when all the enemies of the enthroned One will become subject to Him. The right to rule given by the Father to the Son will be exercised here on earth in the Son’s millennial kingdom.

Throughout these seven quotations the writer of Hebrews has

From the fall of man on, God communicated with humankind through mediators because of His holiness in contrast to man’s sinfulness. God’s separateness from sin is something we should never forget nor make light of in our relationship with Him. God is holy, which means He is entirely without sin and separate from sin. Just because He has allowed us to draw near to Him through the blood of Christ does not mean that He has changed his mind about sin—or that we can make light of sin in our lives. His desire for us is that we share His holiness as Jesus Christ conforms us to His image. Let’s get serious about sin in our lives, and strive to live holy lives, because He is holy.

emphasized the sovereignty and authority of the Son, in contrast to the role of angels who are “all ministering spirits” (Heb. 1:14). Angels who minister under the authority of an administrator are certainly inferior to the one they serve. Thus by that which the Old Testament reveals about the nature and work of angels, the author clearly demonstrates that the One who has come as Son and Revealer is superior to the angels. Consequently, His revelation should take precedence over any and all revelation given through angels.

Understandably, it has been difficult for many recipients of this epistle to sever their ties from the order originally established by God’s revelation given to Moses through angels. But the apostle desired that those who were still bound to that old revelation would realize they were following an inferior revelation, and that they should submit themselves to the revelation given through the superior Revealer, Jesus Christ.

D. A Stern Warning Against Neglect (2:1–4)

- 1** Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.
- 2** For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward,

By now it has become obvious that much of Hebrews deals with the fulfillment of things God promised throughout the Old Testament. The Bible—and God’s plan for humankind—is like that. Nothing He has begun will remain unfinished. No promise will remain unrealized, and no prophecy will remain unfulfilled. There is not a “God of the Old Testament” and a “God of the New Testament.” There is one God, who initiated in the Old Testament many, many things that have been fulfilled in the New Testament or will be fulfilled in the prophetic future. That is why it is so important that we, as Christians, understand the full scope of God’s Word, from Genesis to Revelation. While the popular emphasis on “practical application” is helpful, without careful study of the Bible from cover to cover, we will have precious little in our hearts to practically apply! If you are not involved in a weekly study of the Scriptures, do your best to find a Bible study group that will help you understand more of God’s Word and His wonderful plan for the ages.