

Paying Close Attention to the Son

Hebrews 1:1 – 2:4

1:1-4 Son superior to the prophets and angels

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, **God** spoke to our fathers by the **prophets**, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his **Son**,

whom he appointed the heir of all things,

through whom also he created the world.

*3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the **word of his power**.*

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.*

- Vss 1:1-4 form one long introductory sentence (exordium) in Greek. (Pfitzner, Victor 1997).
- Concentric symmetry (Lane, William L. 1991)

The Son's **Superiority** over previous speaking – directly instead of through prophets & angels

The Son – **King & Priest**, *appointed heir, making purification, reigning at RH Majesty on high.*

The Son - Divine creator and sustainer, eternal and ever-present sustainer.

- *God speaks (1:1). Judaism and Christianity are not human inventions – revelation.*
- *God speaks fully & finally “by Son” (Cf. John 1) and puts an end to the need to go back to the old.*
- *The Son is greater/superior to the prophets and the (excellent) angels.*
- *By implication, this revelation has come, at one time, in one way, putting an end to the need for further revelations,*
- *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.*

Nature: Word of His Power, awesome majesty of the Son. Son of Man (2:6). Rev 1:14f *The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.*

Nature: Priestly sacrifice of the Son of Man lifted up: *3b After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.* Made purification for sins through an act that looks like weakness to those who trust in human strength. An act of power that reveals God's loving and kind reign and melts hard-hearted rebels who refuse to hear (NC). See 1 Cor 1:24-25

1:4-14 The Son Superior to the Angels

1:5-7 For to which of the angels did God ever say ... ? Of the angels he says ...

OT Quote 1. Psalm 2:7 *I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you.’*

OT Quote 2. 2 Sam. 7:12-14 *When your [David's] days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.*

OT Quote 3 *“Let all God's angels worship him.”* from LXX (Septuagint) of Deut. 32:43. Example, angels worshipped him at the incarnation - Luke 2:8-14

- Angels are *excellent* (1:4), mighty creatures and, when revealed, there is a temptation to worship them (e.g. Rev 22:8-9). There is, however, no compelling evidence that the readers worshipped angels, such as warning in Colossians 2:18.
- Angels are understood to be meditators of the Law e.g. Deut. 33:2 and Gal 3:19. Pennicook (p12): *“The contrast is between the revelation mediated by angels viz. the Law, and that mediated by the Son.”*
- The Mosaic Covenant (Old Covenant) informed their culture, worship, methods of dealing with guilt/sin. NC, mediated by the Son of God who is David's greater Son, superseded OC. Subsequent exhortations around NC worship, priesthood, purification for sin etc needed to show the superiority of Son to Angels.
- **Background:** Cultural & physical opposition pressed Hebrew believers to return to their culturally “safe place”, reverting to the “old covenant” (Law/Mosaic). Wishing, as it were, to “return to Egypt”; wandering in the desert instead of entering the promised rest (ref chapter 3:7-4:-10).
- **Qus:** Where are our culturally safe places? Where/how do we seek rest? What would we be tempted to “go back” to? Are these different questions?
- **Firstborn brought into the world** (1:6) – there is only one incarnation, this is a culturally significant title of status, not an indication of the Son whose “years are without” end ever having a beginning. The firstborn inherits all things; we inherit salvation (1:14) because of the ministry of the firstborn heir of all things (1:2).
- **OT Quote 4. Psalm 104:4** He makes his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire.
- In quoting from the Psalms the writer describes the role and status of the angels: messengers who powerfully & obediently serve the Son on the throne.

1:8-9 But of the Son he says ...

OT Quote 5. Psalm 45:6-7 Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.

- **O God:** ...”. The Son is addressed as God!
- **Forever and ever:** “What is never true of human kings is fully true of the King who shares God's deity.” Pfitzner.
- **Anointed:** Messianic term (per 2 Sam 7 prophecy and Psalm 2)

1:10-12 And [of the Son he says], ...

OT Quote 6. Psalm 102:25-27 Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end.

- Psalm 102 is a desperate and urgent cry to God.
- In his despair, oppression and knowledge of mortality the psalmist remembers and praises the Lord (v25-27 quoted above), and concludes with (v28) *“The children of your servants shall dwell secure.”* Secured in the eternal, unchangeable Son – finding comfort.
- The readers are suffering and under pressure and needed to be reminded of the brevity of life and the abiding and eternal nature of God, they inherit through salvation (1:14).

1:13 *And to which of the angels has he ever said ... ?*

OT Quote 7 Psalm 110:1 *The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."*

- Matthew 22:41-46 Jesus asked the Pharisees re the Messiah, "Whose son is he?" They knew him to be the son of David. Jesus then quoted this passage (Psalm 110:1) to the Pharisees and then asked them "If David calls him Lord, how is he his son?". Messianic Secret now revealed!

1:14 *Are they not ... ?*

- No angel, mighty as they are, has ever had been given the power to rule - they are ministering spirits and servants under the overarching ministry of the Son.
- This does not diminish the ministering and servant nature of the Son. "*Christ himself is the 'minister' who presides over a new 'ministry' that replaces worship under the old covenant. Hence the angels have only a subordinate ministry. And since their [the angels] mission is to serve those who are heirs of salvation, they are, in one sense lower than humans (2:16), though partners with them in worship (12:22)*" Pfitzner.
- Note the tense of 1:14 " ... who are to inherit salvation".

2:1-4 Exhortation 2:1-4

*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.*

- Because they have heard God speaking Son in such a final superior way, demonstrably pointed to by how He has spoken to in the past, they needed to pay closer attention to this Word. This exhortation is the main reason for writing to the Hebrew believers. Hebrews 13:22 I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.
- The readers problem was neglecting their salvation, leading to **drifting away**. This neglect is strongly called out: disobedience (2:2), neglect (2:3), hardened hearts (ch3), unbelief (ch3&4), dull of hearing (5:11), immature (by inference 5:12), sluggish (6:12).
- "*We have to be continually reminded of what we believe. Neither this belief nor any other will automatically remain alive in the mind. It must be fed. And as a matter of fact, if you examined a hundred people who had lost their faith in Christianity, I wonder how many of them would turn out to have been reasoned out of it by honest argument? Do not most people simply drift away?*" C.S. Lewis.
- "Remember to remember" Noel Due.
- Writer exhorts as one of those he writes to; "we must pay much closer attention". He writes from a place of knowing the work of Jesus Christ – "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weakness ..." 4:15. In this way the writer shares Christ's likeness in that identifies with those he under-shepherds, and how we warn others against drifting into apostasy.
- Writer's purpose isn't to accumulate an academic collection of facts with which to argue our case. The message is to persevere in faith, *holding fast* (see 3:6, 4:14, 6:18 & 10:23) our confidence, our confession, and to our hope.

Study Plan (A) for Weeks 2-5. Passages in Hebrews regarding Rest, Priesthood, Covenant, and the eternal unshakable kingdom.

Preparation for next week: Please read Hebrews 3:1-4:13 and Psalm 95; we'll be focussing on Hebrews 4:1-11 alongside Psalm 95.