



Hebrews - Chapter Two

I Hebrews 1:1-2:18 - Jesus Is Superior to Angelic Beings (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Two

Having demonstrated the pre-eminence of Jesus and his superiority over the angels in his quality as the Son of God, the author now intersperses his argument with warning and exhortation against neglecting the message of the Gospel in the way that the Jews had drifted away from the original intention of the Mosaic Law. Although the law was significant for it was from God and had been delivered by his angels, the Gospel is far greater for it was brought in by the Lord in person, authenticated by God through signs, wonders and the Holy Spirit's gifts.

It was God's original plan that man should take stewardship of creation but had failed. In the new world that was to come, that part of the plan would be fully implemented but it had already been partially implemented and signposted through the man Jesus. It was through his suffering and death that the rest of humankind could become his siblings and thus were being prepared for their future role. Thus Jesus was also superior to the angelic beings and indeed humankind for he is also the Son of Man: *<<For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; and he has given him authority to execute judgement, because he is the Son of Man>>* (John 5:26-27).

Because of Jesus' victory over sin and death, he is exalted to the position of the true High Priest, as he had fulfilled God's will and had remained free of sin even though he was in sinful flesh and had been tempted just as everyone else has been.

1.b Hebrews 2:1-4 - Warning against neglecting salvation

This warning calls the reader to pay heed to the greater salvation which was declared by the Lord himself, attested to by reliable human eyewitnesses, and authenticated by God's power. Following standard Jewish argumentation: *<<how*

much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!>> (Hebrews 9:14), and: <<Anyone who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy 'on the testimony of two or three witnesses.' How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by those who have spurned the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace?>> (Hebrews 10:28-29), the argument proceeds from the lesser, i.e. retributions under the Mosaic Law (v.2), to the greater, i.e. the danger of neglecting the greater salvation (vv.3-4).

¹ Therefore we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.

Hebrews 2:1

Therefore. Since Jesus is superior to the angels, we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, because this message of the Son of God is also superior to any prior revelation, which was given to the prophets through angels (v.2).

To drift away from that which has been revealed results in dangerous neglect of the Gospel message (v.3). Throughout history this has led many people, both Jew and Gentile, to fail to accept the gracious gift of life that God has offered to all: *<<I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live>> (Deuteronomy 30:19).*

There is a danger to individuals who allow their spiritual lives to drift, for it is all too easy for the tide of life to take them further away from their intended course than they ever realised, and it is always so much harder to then start to plot a new course to get back on track. It can also be detrimental to the church for a congregation that has a number of drifters often finds itself also being pulled off course, away from serving its local community, because of the ongoing effects internally within the church that such drifting can cause.

² For if the message declared through angels was valid, and every transgression or disobedience received a just penalty,

Hebrews 2:2

The message declared through angels is the Mosaic Law, which was given by angels, deduced in Jewish tradition from: *<<He said: The Lord came from Sinai, and dawned from Seir upon us; he shone forth from Mount Paran. With him were myriads of holy ones; at his right, a host of his own>> (Deuteronomy 33:2).* This was referred to by Stephen at his trial before the Sanhedrin: *<<You are the ones that received the law as ordained by angels, and yet you have not kept it>> (Acts 7:53),* and by Paul in his own arguments: *<<Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring would come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained through angels by a mediator>> (Galatians 3:19).*

Valid or reliable. Even though the revelation in Christ is superior, the author does not diminish the importance of the Mosaic Law, which was valid and which bears just penalty or retribution, the Greek *misthapodosia*, which also means reward or recompense, and here conveys legal sanctions.

Every transgression or disobedience. Two words here express both a refusal to follow, Greek *parabasis*, and a refusal to heed, Greek *parakoē*, the Law of Moses. Every act of disobedience merits retribution, indeed, all sin merits punishment: <<*For the wages of sin is death*>> (Romans 6:23a), although grace must also be taken into account: <<*but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*>> (Romans 6:23b).

The writer here is alluding to the story of the Jewish nation, who had the law given to them, neglected to live by its ordinances, turned away from God in their hearts, and paid a high but just price as a nation. Their experience is available as a template for all people now to take note that the law has been superseded by Jesus and his Gospel. If people choose to do the same and ignore this final offer from God then they can expect nothing other than being dispersed from God's presence for all eternity.

³ how can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? It was declared at first through the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him,

Hebrews 2:3

How can we escape? If the Mosaic Law came with retribution for failure to follow and obey it, then surely the greater salvation announced by the Lord comes with more dangerous retribution for those who neglect it, i.e. <<*had no concern*>> (Hebrews 8:9d). The appropriate answer to this question is to have absolute faith in the Saviour: <<*Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God*>> (John 3:18).

If we neglect so great a salvation is, in essence, a reference to sin, although to neglect the Gospel is to neglect the author of the salvation it offers, and that is to be eternally negligent.

Returning to the theme of v.1 then this could refer to drifting away from the faith, although it can just as easily be drifting along in the faith.

So great a salvation. This is the supreme gift of grace given by the Father in recognition of the work by the Son. It is a great salvation because it is offered through the perfect Saviour. Refer also to comments made on Hebrews 1:14.

It was declared at first through the Lord. It was Jesus himself, the Lord: <<*And, 'In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands'*>> (Hebrews 1:10), and: <<*Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant*>> (Hebrews 13:20), who first announced this salvation, and his superiority proves the superiority of this revelation.

Attested is the Greek verb *bebaiōō* that also conveys a sense of assurance and confirmation.

By those who heard refers to the eyewitnesses to Jesus' life and teaching. Apparently the audience and most likely the author of Hebrews were not eyewitnesses of Jesus; they received the testimony from others who were. Luke made a similar statement in the opening of his Gospel: <<*Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed*>> (Luke 1:1-4), and: <<*We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judæa and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead*>> (Acts 10:39-41).

⁴ while God added his testimony by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to his will.

Hebrews 2:4

God added his testimony. God's witness came through miracles performed alongside the Gospel's proclamation, thereby confirming its authenticity.

The three terms signs, wonders, and miracles overlap in meaning and thus should not be finely distinguished. They appear together in: <<*People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know*>> (Acts 2:22 NLT), <<*The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, signs and wonders and mighty works*>> (2 Corinthians 12:12), and: <<*The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders*>> (2 Thessalonians 2:9); and elsewhere signs and wonders are often connected.

There are many sceptics who claim the miracles performed were bogus or accentuated by the NT authors, otherwise they would still be in evidence today if they were authentic. Such claims are easily refuted for indeed miracles are a daily occurrence around the world. However, what should also be considered is that such signs were given to authenticate Jesus and his message, and then to support the apostles in the early days of evangelistic mission. Now that the weight of evidence for the truth of the Gospel is so overwhelming the need to support its promulgation with signs and wonders has diminished.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not mentioned very often in this letter but it is clear that the writer takes it for granted that his readers know that they are indwelt by God's presence if they have genuine faith to believe in Jesus as the

Christ of God. They would also be in receipt of one or more of the gifts that he chooses to bestow on each and every person who comes to God through Christ.

Distributed according to his will probably refers not just to the distribution of spiritual gifts, as Paul describes them in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 and Ephesians 4:11-13, but also to all the works of God; these are works done according to God's will, not of human volition: <<*Well then, does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?*>> (Galatians 3:5). The Greek term *merismos* can be translated as apportioning or distributions given to individuals by the Holy Spirit: <<*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit*>> (1 Corinthians 12:4). This statement could be meant that it is according to God's will or that the Holy Spirit has the authority to distribute the gifts as he deems appropriate. However, it is likely that he too comes under the authority of the Father.

1.c Hebrews 2:5-18 - The founder of salvation

Jesus is shown to be also superior to angels since, as Son of Man, the world is subjected to him, although this has yet to be fully revealed (vv.5-9). Jesus' glorious sacrificial suffering and death on the Cross required him to partake of humanity (vv.10-18).

God has designated that mankind will be stewards over the new created order in the age to come, just as they were intended to be over the original creation. This can be seen through the example of Jesus, who has led the way as their elder brother by becoming just like his human siblings when he was made a little lower than the angels, just as they were, yet is also now the true High Priest.

⁵ Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels.

Hebrews 2:5

Now continues the argument from Hebrews 1:5-14 as well as from vv.2-4. The human beings, or more likely the superior Son of Man of v.6, have responsibilities of worldwide rule not accorded to angels.

The coming world is a common Jewish expression referring to the future age in which all of God's purposes in salvation will be fulfilled. The author, referring also to those working with him, was speaking of a future, although the last days have already been inaugurated: <<*but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds*>> (Hebrews 1:2). This is not just a key theme for this section but for the whole book and is the reason why Hebrews is a letter of such great hope.

⁶ But someone has testified somewhere,

‘What are human beings that you are mindful of them,
or mortals, that you care for them?’

Hebrews 2:6

But someone has testified somewhere. The ancient bible did not have chapter and verse references as it does today. On first reading it may seem that the writer

knew of this Scripture but not where it was located. However, given his excellent choice of bible passages throughout the letter to prove his argument, it seems unlikely that the author was not extremely well versed in the Septuagint translation of the Scriptures.

Examples of the how the NT writers would normally reference OT Scriptures include: <<All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ‘Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel’, which means, ‘God is with us’>> (Matthew 1:22-23), a reference to Isaiah 7:14; and: <<So they disagreed with each other; and as they were leaving, Paul made one further statement: ‘The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah, “Go to this people and say, You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive”>> (Acts 28:25-26), from Isaiah 6:9-10.

What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them? This quotation from Psalm 8:4-6 displays God’s exalted care for the human race generally in his creation, although many versions translate mortals as son of man, which hints at a special focus on the Messiah as the truest representative of mankind: <<In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence>> (Daniel 7:13 NIV). Refer also to v.9.

The author of Hebrews turned to this mortals or ‘son of man’ passage with full awareness of Jesus’ frequent application of the ‘son of man’ title to himself, and now the author is about to show how Psalm 8:4-6 applies to all of humankind but is specifically fulfilled in Jesus.

Son of Man combines in one person both human and divine traits, and can be used in Scripture to indicate that such a person is much more than a merely gifted mortal. However, it can also be used generally, such as: <<Then King David turned to the entire assembly and said, “My son Solomon, whom God has clearly chosen as the next king of Israel, is still young and inexperienced. The work ahead of him is enormous, for the Temple he will build is not for mere mortals – it is for the Lord God himself!>> (1 Chronicles 29:1), <<Can a mortal be innocent before God? Can anyone be pure before the Creator?>> (Job 4:17), and: <<He said to me: O mortal, stand up on your feet, and I will speak with you>> (Ezekiel 2:1), where the Hebrew for mortal is *ben adam*.

Son of Man is Jesus’ favourite self-designation: <<And he said to him, ‘Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man’>> (John 1:51), indicating the true meaning of his identity and ministry as:

1. The humble servant, who has come to forgive common sinners: <<‘But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’ – he then said to the paralytic – ‘Stand up, take your bed and go to your home’>> (Matthew 9:6).
2. The suffering servant, whose atoning death and resurrection will redeem his people: <<Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’>> (Matthew 16:13), and: <<‘For the Son of Man is to come with his

angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom’>> (Matthew 16:27-28).

3. The glorious King and Judge, who will return to establish God’s Kingdom on earth: <<*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory>> (Matthew 25:31), and: <<Jesus said to him, ‘You have said so. But I tell you, From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven’>> (Matthew 26:64).*

7 You have made them for a little while lower than the angels;
you have crowned them with glory and honour,

Hebrews 2:7

You have made them refers to mortals (v.6), but is translated as you have made him in versions that prefer ‘son of man’. Some interpreters think the author of Hebrews, quoting from Psalm 8, is talking only about man in general, the human race. Others think he is already talking about Jesus, the true Son of Man.

In writing of ‘the world to come’, which is the main subject both of this passage and of the whole letter; the thrust of a good deal of the argument is that, in Jesus the Messiah, this hope has burst into the world already, bringing sure signs of the new world that will eventually come into being.

The present passage moves through three stages to make this point. The first, continuing the theme of the previous two passages, is that God always intended his unique Son to be superior to the angels, even to the angels through whom the Jewish law had been given.

This time, though, he speaks of this superiority in terms of the future role that has been marked out for the Son. In the coming world, God intends that the original order of creation should finally be realised: the world is to be ruled, wisely and creatively, by human beings who themselves live in trusting obedience to God the Father.

For a little while lower than the angels. If this refers to humankind in general, then it means that during this earthly life believers are lower in status and authority than angels. But that situation is temporary, lasting for this life only. If, however, the writer is already referring to Jesus, it means that in his earthly suffering Jesus’ glorious divine nature was temporarily obscured: <<*Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross>> (Philippians 2:5-8).*

There will come a time when mankind, at least those who have chosen eternal life through Christ Jesus, will be made equal to the angels, thus making the statements in this Psalm a reality: <<*Indeed they cannot die any more, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection>> (Luke 20:36).*

You have crowned them with glory and honour. Again, some translations substitute him for them, indicating the rightful place of Jesus in heaven. However, in the context that this passage can be applied to all those who choose to return to God through the free gift offered by his Son, then it indicates so clearly the true depth of God's love and grace for the people he has created.

⁸ subjecting all things under their feet.'

Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them,

Hebrews 2:8

Subjecting all things under their feet, or his feet, echoes the creation account, where God put everything under the stewardship of Adam and Eve: <<*Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'* So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth'>> (Genesis 1:26-28).

As previously noted, God seems to intend that man should once again be given dominion over creation, although this time it will only be for those who have already made a commitment to him through his Christ.

Again, this passage can be seen in light of mankind being elevated to ruling the new world after Jesus has returned, with them ruling with him over all things. Some of the faithful servants will be given more responsibility than others, as indicated in the Parable of the Ten Minas: <<*He said to him, "Well done, good slave! Because you have been trustworthy in a very small thing, take charge of ten cities"*>> (Luke 19:17).

But if Jesus, the true representative of humanity, is specifically in view, then it means that: <<*the coming world*>> (v.5), has already been subjected to Jesus, indicating his superiority to angels in his authority to rule that world and this one. This also implies that he rules the angels themselves, since nothing is outside their or his control. However, as it is, believers do not see the entire world as yet being subject either to human beings or to Christ.

This raises the question, 'what has happened to God's plan to put everything in subjection under man, or under Christ?' The answer is of course complex and worthy of fuller discussion than can be given here. The truth is that we live in the 'now but not yet' of the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom has been increasingly present in the hearts and lives of believers since the death and resurrection of Jesus. The more people who choose to live their life by the Holy Spirit, the more the Kingdom of God will advance, and it is Christ who has dominion. Therefore, those who enter the Kingdom here on earth should be living in subjection to Christ. Creation itself will not come under full subjection

of man, i.e. only those chosen by God who do so through Christ, until the time of the Second Coming.

⁹ but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Hebrews 2:9

But we do see Jesus. At this point all interpreters agree that the focus of the passage is Jesus in his fully human nature and then reinstated back to his divine nature in the presence of the Father.

The phrase for a little while and the sequence of events in vv.7-8, taken from Psalm 8:5-6, demonstrate that, after first being made lower than the angels, Jesus was subsequently crowned and exalted. While Jesus' sufferings indicated his humiliation and subjection, his suffering of death was also the reason for his being crowned with glory and honour.

Jesus tasted death as a work of God's grace done on behalf of everyone, i.e. all those who follow him: <<*For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, because a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant*>> (Hebrews 9:15). This is the first mention of the Lord's name in Hebrews; the title Christ first appears in the next chapter: <<*Christ, however, was faithful over God's house as a son, and we are his house if we hold firm the confidence and the pride that belong to hope*>> (Hebrews 3:6).

Crowned with glory and honour echoes the same phrase used in v.7. Although the human race generally did not fulfil God's plan to put everything on earth under man's feet (vv.6-8), there is one man who is fulfilling God's great plan for human beings, and that is Jesus. In this statement, the writer removes the scandal of the Cross, bringing it to the fore in its true majestic glory.

Here, the writer to the Hebrews brings together these texts about the Messiah and about the truly human one in order to speak both of the future role of Jesus in God's new creation and of his present position, already exalted as Lord, but as a representative of the people. That is, he has gone ahead of the rest of his followers, now his siblings, into God's future; the future in which order and justice - saving order, healing justice - will come to the world. The exaltation of Jesus, and the fact that those who follow him can celebrate that and live in the light of it, is one of the major themes of the whole book.

What the author is also showing is that, where the Psalm does allude to humankind having ruling authority over creation, something that has clearly not yet happened, then the Psalm should not be dismissed because it has happened through the work, life and death of the human Jesus, the template for all those who would take on the fulfilment of the role after Jesus returns to make all things new: <<*For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind*>> (Isaiah 65:17).

By the grace of God he might taste death for everyone reveals just how marvellous the gift of life eternal is for those who turn to Jesus with sincere and thankful hearts for what he achieved in human flesh.

¹⁰ It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Hebrews 2:10

God, for whom and through whom all things exist refers to God the Father, who acts to make perfect the pioneer of their salvation, who is Jesus the expected Christ of God.

Many children or sons. The followers of the one unique Son of God are now also called children for they are adopted into the glory of the newly redeemed human family. In vv.11-12 the writer chooses to call them brothers and sisters, returning to the term children in v.13 and again in Hebrews 12:5-8.

Bringing many children to glory was confirmed in the revelation given to John: <<*They sing a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation'*>> (Revelation 5:9).

Pioneer or founder. The Greek can designate either an originator or a leader: <<*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God*>> (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Salvation was discussed in Hebrews 1:14 and further in v.3.

Sufferings, especially Jesus' suffering of death, is the concept of making perfect and is applied elsewhere in Hebrews, both to Jesus himself: <<*and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him*>> (Hebrews 5:9), <<*For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect for ever*>> (Hebrews 7:28), and to his work in sanctifying his followers: <<*For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified*>> (Hebrews 10:14), <<*and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect*>> (Hebrews 12:23).

In saying that Jesus was made perfect, the author is not suggesting that Jesus was sinful: <<*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin*>> (Hebrews 4:15), and: <<*For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens*>> (Hebrews 7:26), or flawed in anyway, but that as he lived his life, his maturity and experience deepened, yet always with full obedience to the Father. As a human being, he needed to live his life and obey God, which he did perfectly, in order to become the perfect sacrifice for sins.

¹¹ For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters,

Hebrews 2:11

The one who sanctifies. It is Jesus who makes his people holy through his blood: <<*Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood*>> (Hebrews 13:12).

Those who are sanctified. Jesus' true followers, who are made holy by his sacrifice: <<*And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*>> (Hebrews 10:10).

All have one Father is also translated as all have one source. Some commentators think one source is a reference to the common humanity shared by Jesus and those being saved (vv.12-18), or to their common descent from Abraham, or Adam to include Gentiles. Others think that the one source is God the Father, as translated in the NRSVA. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. Since God is their common Father or they share a common descent, they are members of the same family, and therefore they are his brothers and sisters. Those that are faithful to Jesus will be brought into the presence of the Father: <<*Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven*>> (Matthew 10:32).

As the firstborn, refer to comments made on Hebrews 1:6, Jesus is the eldest brother in a very large family. This family only became possible because of Jesus' love for and commitment to both the Father and the people who were lost, who would have remained so without that love for them as well. In true fashion for the perfect role of eldest son, Jesus came to where his siblings were in trouble and showed them a way out. How different Jesus is to the elder brother portrayed in the Parable of the Prodigal told in Luke 15:11-32, and thank God for that!

¹² saying,

‘I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters,
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.’

Hebrews 2:12

Psalm 22, from which this verse is quoted (Psalm 22:22), is associated with Jesus' death, e.g. Psalm 22:1 and Psalm 22:16-18, as well as his resurrection, Psalm 22:19-24. The resurrected Messiah, his suffering completed, calls his brothers and sisters to join with him in worship. Both this verse and: <<*When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives*>> (Matthew 26:30), speak of Jesus singing, but here the congregation in view is the assembly of all the redeemed in heaven.

The first 21 verses of Psalm 22 portray a person who truly trusts God and yet suffers terribly, feeling abandoned. Yet the verse quoted here marks the turning point in the whole Psalm that leads not to despair but to hope of a great victory: <<*Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about*>>

the Lord, and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it>> (Psalm 22:30-31).

¹³ And again,

‘I will put my trust in him.’

And again,

‘Here am I and the children whom God has given me.’

Hebrews 2:13

I will put my trust in him. King David knew the secret to life in all its fullness despite the trials and tribulations he faced on an almost daily basis.

Here am I and the children whom God has given me alludes to Jesus being fully human in this illustration of parent and children that are, in essence, of the same nature.

The second citation in this verse clearly comes from Isaiah 8:18, and thus the first likely derives from: <<*I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him*>> (Isaiah 8:17), but following the Septuagint translation. However, it also bears resemblance to: <<*The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower*>> (Psalm 18:2 AV), where David demonstrated his reliance on the Father. The prophet links himself with the children who will follow God. Jesus, as the Messiah/prophet, similarly associates himself with believers, who are the Father’s human children.

God has given me. Jesus stated that none of these were lost: <<*While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled*>> (John 17:2).

¹⁴ Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death.

Hebrews 2:14-15

A human Saviour was necessary, because human beings, i.e. children, are in need of a propitiatory sacrifice and a sympathetic high priest (vv.17-18).

Share flesh and blood. Jesus was fully human, just as the children are, and as the high priest had to be: <<*Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness*>> (Hebrews 5:1-2).

Jesus’ death cleanses his followers of their sin and guilt, destroying the power of death that is upon them, i.e. the grip of the devil: <<*Everyone who commits sin*

is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil>> (1 John 3:8), and gives hope and deliverance to those who were in slavery to the fear of death.

The one who has the power of death. Satan's power is not absolute, but is under the control of God, who ultimately rules over life and death: <<See now that I, even I, am he; there is no god besides me. I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and no one can deliver from my hand>> (Deuteronomy 32:39), <<The Lord said to Satan, 'Very well, he is in your power; only spare his life'>> (Job 2:6), <<You turn us back to dust, and say, 'Turn back, you mortals'>> (Psalm 90:3), <<Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed>> (Psalm 139:16), and: <<When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he placed his right hand on me, saying, 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive for ever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades>> (Revelation 1:17-18). Nevertheless, Satan: <<was a murderer from the beginning>> (John 8:44b), and he does have power to harm people to some extent: <<And when he had stepped out of the boat, immediately a man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit met him. He lived among the tombs; and no one could restrain him any more, even with a chain; for he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles he broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always howling and bruising himself with stones>> (Mark 5:2-5), <<And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?>> (Luke 13:16). The verse at least means Satan has power to work in the realm of death, and to incite people into sin that leads to death: <<Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?>> (Romans 6:16), and, as previously referred to: <<For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord>> (Romans 6:23). However, the emphasis of the verse is not on Satan's power but on Christ's triumph over both Satan and death.

Destroy the devil. Satan was the first true sinner, for his ambition is to oppose God in all that he does and to draw as many other people, and indeed his fellow angels, into sin. Jesus scored a resounding victory by resisting his main adversary while he was in the weakness of human flesh (Luke 4:1-13), and delivered a crushing blow when he endured the Cross. Although Satan remains defiant and an enemy of all disciples, Jesus' followers can be assured that he is defeated and that whatever strength he has can be resisted by those who keep their eyes fixed on Jesus. However, this brings the writer's warning into the context of reality: <<Therefore we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it>> (v.1). For those who do drift, Satan is still lurking, waiting to pounce: <<If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it>> (Genesis 4:7).

Free those who all their lives were held in slavery. This would have been a powerful statement to the first Jewish Christians. The Exodus, where God brought his people out of slavery in Egypt: <<*When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son*>> (Hosea 11:1), and into the Promised Land, was the bedrock of the Jewish nation. Due to their continued apostasy, they had been sent out into exile. First the ten northern tribes had been captured by the Assyrians. Then those who had remained in Judah were taken by the Babylonians. Although a remnant subsequently returned from Babylon, the land was never again truly theirs and even what they had they lost again in AD70 and did not return to Israel again until 1947. Even now, the battles continue. What the writer is speaking of here is not another Exodus for the Jews, but one for all of humankind; a release from slavery by the fear of death to a life of true freedom, both in this age and the one to come.

¹⁶ For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham.

Hebrews 2:16

The reference to angels recalls the superiority of the Son over them and the need for him to partake of human nature. As God, Jesus would be of great help to the angels, although in that nature he could not die. In order to become the atoning sacrificial lamb to save humankind from its sin, he needed to take on the same nature in order to be tested as they were, then to suffer and die in their place.

Descendants of Abraham connects to the OT story, referring not merely to Jewish Israel but also to the more expansive promises made by God to Abraham: <<*Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed'*>> (Genesis 12:1-3). Refer also to Genesis 17:4-21, Hebrews 6:13-7:10, and Hebrews 11:8-19.

Both Jews and Gentiles, who have chosen to follow Jesus, have become the new spiritual Israel.

¹⁷ Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people.

Hebrews 2:17

He had to become like his brothers and sisters. Unless Jesus became fully human in every respect, except for sin, he could not represent believers as their high priest, for he could not demonstrate the empathy with them in their suffering.

Like his brothers and sisters emphasises Jesus' human nature, which was necessary in order to serve as high priest on behalf of humanity.

Atonement or propitiation is the Greek *hilaskomai* and conveys the sense of an atoning sacrifice that puts away sin and satisfies God's wrath: <<'Absolve, O Lord, your people Israel, whom you redeemed; do not let the guilt of innocent blood remain in the midst of your people Israel.' Then they will be absolved of blood-guilt>> (Deuteronomy 21:8), <<For your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my guilt, for it is great>> (Psalm 25:11), <<But the tax-collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!">> (Luke 18:13).

Some scholars have argued that the word atonement, or most likely propitiation, should be translated expiation, the wiping away of sin, but the word cannot be restricted to the wiping away of sins as it also refers to the satisfaction or appeasement of God's wrath, turning it to favour.

¹⁸ Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

Hebrews 2:18

By what he suffered refers to Jesus' sufferings as a human, especially the mocking, his scourging, bearing God's wrath, and his agonising death. His separation from the Father on the Cross was part of his spiritual suffering.

Tested or **tempted**. Jesus, as high priest, was tested in every way and yet did not sin: <<For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin>> (Hebrews 4:15), and: <<For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens>> (Hebrews 7:26).

He is able to help. Jesus is a sympathetic and merciful high priest who knows human spiritual infirmities since he experienced the full range of temptations, and he has atoned for all transgressions, blessing billions of people throughout the church age in doing so: <<Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit>> (Psalm 32:1-2 NIV).