

Hebrews 1 • The Person of Christ

Introduction

Hebrews directly addresses the central issue of true, Old Testament Judaism in the fulfillment of God's Word and ways through the Messiah, and that He has specifically come in the Person of Christ. In Old Testament times God spoke through visions, dreams, symbols, and events as well as through His messengers the Prophets and angels. The writer of Hebrews establishes that Christ is God's final and ultimate fulfillment of the Word and provides detailed explanations of how Old Testament teachings and observances were shadows of the final fulfillment to come through Christ. It is crucial to understand this opening lesson in order to fully understand the whole context of the entire Book of Hebrews to come.

¹God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ²in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. ³And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

[Read v.1-4]

Q: Why would it be a particularly powerful statement that "God...has spoken"?

A: More than 400 years of silence occurred in what we call the "Intertestamental Period" between Malachi and John the Baptist's announcement of the arrival of the Messiah. The writer of Hebrews is identifying Christ the Son not just as a direct messenger of God but as the Living Word.

Q: Why might this opening sound very familiar to that of the Gospel of John?

A: Christ is identified as the Living Word of God through whom God has not only spoken but the same Word "through whom also He made the world". (v.2)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

— John 1:1–3

Q: Having established Christ the Living Word and Creator, what is the third characteristic assigned to Him?

A: "...appointed heir of all things". (v.2)

*For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created **through** Him and **for** Him.*

— Colossians 1:16

Q: How does the Son reflect the image and character of the Father?

1. "...He is the radiance of His glory..." (v.3) – The Light of God.
2. "...He is...the exact representation of His nature..." (v.3) – The Nature of God.
3. "...He...upholds all things by the word of His power." (v.3) – The Revelation of God.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

— Colossians 1:15

Q: What appears to be the single most important work of the Son which confirms in Him all these qualities of God?

A: "...He...made purification of sins..." (v.3) From the outset the importance of the central work of the cross is established.

Q: Who are the two groups which the Son is contrasted to in these verses?

A: “The prophets” and “the angels”, both messengers and servants of God, yet identified as being “much better than” them because of the work of the cross.

Q: How were God’s revelations given previous to Christ?

A: “...in many portions and in many ways”. (v.1) This is alluding to the fact that no prophet or previous messenger of God received the complete revelation.

Q: What kind of revelations were mainly given to Old Testament messengers?

A: Revelations which pointed to the Messiah, the final revelation from God. Christ is God’s “last Word”, so to speak, to the world, God’s final and full revelation.

Point: *Anyone boasting they have received a “new” revelation from God is deceived as Christ is the final revelation being illuminated by God.*

Application: *Christ is not just the Word, the Heir, and the Creator, but the Light, the Nature, and the Revelation of God the Father Himself. He cannot be merely equated to being a prophet or messenger of God, but must be accepted as co-equally God. The qualifying difference in Christ from all others given for our benefit to confirm His identity and authority is the work of the cross.*

Observation

Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

— Galatians 3:19

“Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.”

— Acts 7:52–53

He said,

*“The LORD came from Sinai,
And dawned on them from Seir;
He shone forth from Mount Paran,
And He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones;
At His right hand there was flashing lightning for them.*

— Deuteronomy 33:2

Angels played such a vital role that Scripture reveals that the Law was given through their ministry. If Old Testament Jews paid attention to the Law given through angels, how much greater heed they should give to the Word of God through Christ who is greater than the angels. The author of Hebrews subsequently provides seven Old Testament quotations establishing Christ’s superiority to the angels, a testimony that Christ’s Word is greater.

⁵For to which of the angels did He ever say,
“YOU ARE MY SON,
TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU”?

And again,
“I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM
AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME”?

[Read v.5]

Q: How is Christ here shown to be greater than the angels?

A: Whereas the Old Testament calls angels collectively “sons of God”, (Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6) Christ is the only one specifically identified as “My Son”.

Q: Is the reference to Psalm 2:7 speaking of Christ’s birth in Bethlehem?

A: No, it refers to His resurrection.

He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

— Colossians 1:18

Q: Of whom is the specific, original context of 2 Samuel 7:14 speaking?

A: In the original context it is referring to Solomon. David wanted to build a house for God but God decreed it would come through Solomon, promising that God would be a Father to Solomon. The writer of Hebrews applies this promise to Christ who we know to be “greater than Solomon”. (Mt. 12:42) (Note: This is a biblical example of typology, affirming that Solomon is a type or foreshadow of the Messiah.) Just as God’s Old Testament house was established through His Son, so it was a representation of the ultimate fulfillment of the New Testament house of God established through His Son Jesus.

And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

— 1 Peter 2:4–5

Application: *Only the true House of God can be built by the true Son of God. What the Temple and person of Solomon represented in the Old Testament prefigured the final fulfillment to come through Christ.*

⁶And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says,
“AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM.”

[Read v.6]

Q: In fulfillment of this quotation from Psalm 97:7, how did angels worship Christ in the world while He was God incarnated as a man?

1. At the nativity. (Lk. 2:9-14)
2. At His temptation. (Mt. 4:10-11)
3. At His resurrection. (Mt. 28:2)

Q: Are these the only scriptural references to angels worshiping Christ on earth?

A: They will again worship Him at His Second Coming. (1 Co. 15:24-25; Philip. 2:9)

Application: *If the angels recognize Christ as the firstborn of God and therefore worship and serve Him, how much more should we recognize and serve Him!*

⁷And of the angels He says,
“WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS
WINDS,
AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF
FIRE.”

[Read v.7]

Q: How does this quotation from Psalm 104:4 differentiate the role and position of angels versus that of Christ?

A: Whereas Christ is established as the firstborn and only Son of God, the angels are specifically identified here as created by God to be servants.

Application: *The example of the angels is to be an example to us of our attitude, service, and role toward Christ.*

⁸But of the Son He says,
“YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS
FOREVER AND EVER,
AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER
IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS
KINGDOM.
⁹YOU HAVE LOVED
RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED
LAWLESSNESS;
THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD,
HAS ANOINTED YOU
WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS
ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS.”

[Read v.8-9]

Q: How is this quotation from Psalm 45:6-7 a logical extension of the case presented by the writer of Hebrews to this point?

A: Whereas the angels were created to serve, Christ is here established not as a servant but a Sovereign, the very object of worship and service of all.

Q: What might be significant that this quotation comes from Psalm 45?

A: It is a marriage Psalm which depicts Christ and Israel. God's intention for Israel is repeatedly taught in Scripture as that of a Bride to be faithful to Him alone, an teaching that is also attached to the Bride His Church.

Q: But how could this possibly therefore apply to Christ the Son?

A: God specifically calls Christ the Son “God”.

Application: *God Himself testifies to the deity of Christ, that He is God to be served and worshiped as God.*

¹⁰And,
“YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING
LAID THE FOUNDATION OF
THE EARTH,
AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE
WORKS OF YOUR HANDS;
¹¹THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU
REMAIN;
AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME
OLD LIKE A GARMENT,
¹²AND LIKE A MANTLE YOU
WILL ROLL THEM UP;
LIKE A GARMENT THEY WILL
ALSO BE CHANGED.
BUT YOU ARE THE SAME,
AND YOUR YEARS WILL NOT
COME TO AN END.”

[Read v.10-12]

Q: How does this quotation from Psalm 102:25-27 further differentiate Christ from the angels?

A: Whereas the angels are created beings, Christ is the eternal Son, here again called “LORD”.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
— Hebrews 13:8

Application: *Christ as God always has been, is, and will be. He shares the eternal qualities attributed to God the Father.*

¹³But to which of the angels has He ever said,

“SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,
UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES
A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET”?

[Read v.13]

Q: To what is this quotation from Psalm 110:1 referring?

A: Psalm 110 establishes (and further on in Hebrews it will confirm) that Christ is seated at God’s right hand as the Priest-King. It is a reference used both by Peter and Christ Himself to refer to Christ’s deity.

Application: *There is a work to come in that one day “every knee shall bow” to Christ. (Is. 45:23; Rom. 14:11; Philip. 2:10) He is already on the throne with God the Father.*

¹⁴Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

[Read v.14]

Q: How does this final verse summarize the position of angels?

A: They are not enthroned sons, but “*ministering spirits*” whose work is to minister to us, heirs with Christ through His work of salvation.

It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

— 1 Peter 1:12

Application: *All those serving Christ – both heavenly and earthly alike – are focused on the work of salvation through Christ.*

Overall Application

The purpose of these quotations is to establish that Christ is not merely another messenger like one of the prophets or angels, but is nothing less than God in majesty, glory, and enthroned side-by-side with the Father. In His character, work, and ministry Christ stands supreme, and His current status enthroned as King in Heaven is a reflection of the completed work to come when He will return to establish righteousness on earth. In the mean time, the primary work of His servants – for both the angels who minister in heaven and Believers who minister on earth – is salvation, the work of the cross. Christ is differentiated from all others not just by His divinity, but by His fundamental work to save all those who believe in Him.