

# Hebrews

## Chapter Two

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**Heb 2:1-4 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. <sup>2</sup>For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, <sup>3</sup>how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, <sup>4</sup>God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.**

The beginning words here refer to the previous statements about Jesus being greater than the angels and bringing a greater covenant than that brought through the angels. The author is saying that since he has proven that Jesus is much greater than the angels the readers should pay very close attention to the covenant brought by Him. The verb translated “pay much closer attention” means to not only understand but to apply what one has heard or read. He does not explain what precisely it is that has been heard but the context is that it is the Gospel message of the covenant brought by Jesus Christ. When the author says “what we have heard” he is putting himself in the same category as the recipients of the letter, meaning that he also did not hear the words directly from Jesus and so was not one of the original disciples. The words translated “drift away from it” gives the picture of a ring slipping off a finger or a boat drifting away from its safe setting in a harbor. One does not have to deliberately go away from the message of Jesus to be lost from it for one can just drift away if he had never been anchored to it. One might be asleep in a boat and be unaware that the boat is not anchored properly until he awakens later miles away from the harbor. The people to whom this book was written were being persecuted by the Jewish population and to appease their opponents there was a tendency to slightly modify the Gospel by adding something like circumcision to it or prohibiting the eating of meat offered to idols. But the addition of anything to the Gospel results in a false Gospel and causes people to drift away from the truth. Today there are many false teachings that have invaded the churches and we must be careful that we do not drift away toward those errors. A truly regenerated person will not become an apostate:

*John 10:27-28 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; <sup>28</sup>and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.*

But not all who profess a belief in Jesus Christ are truly saved:

*Matt 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. 7:22 <sup>22</sup>Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your*

*name perform many miracles?'<sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'*

In Heb 2:2 the Greek word translated as “word” is “logos” and means a literal word or series of words in a statement. The precise meaning depends upon context. Jesus is referred to as the “logos” in John 1:1 and in this book it generally means “God’s word”, a revealed word from the very mind of God. The context here demands that the writer is referring to the law given to the Jews. Paul also alludes to this law coming from angels: *Acts 7:53 you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it* and in *Gal 3:19 Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made.* This Old Covenant (OC) was indeed binding and unalterable by the receivers so that everyone who transgressed the law was to be justly punished by God.

The writer continues in verse three to say that since that OC was proper and just then the new covenant (NC) also must be considered in the same way. The emphatic pronoun “we” is used only five times in this book and specifies the people who have heard the great proclamation of the NC. Jesus refers to the offer of salvation specifically in *Luke 19:9-10 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup>For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."* The reference to Abraham is related to the roots of this new salvation as seen from *John 4:22 "You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews.* When the author asks “how shall we escape” he is referring to escape from the wrath of God (John 3:36). Since the NC offers this escape (salvation), neglecting it brings doom. This great salvation was spoken through the Lord meaning that God proclaimed this NC through His Son Jesus Christ. He then says that this great message was confirmed to the writer and those reading this book by those who directly heard the message from Jesus (John 17:20 for this affirmation from Jesus). The word translated “confirmed” is a legal term meaning that the message is securely guaranteed as authentic. Thus we are to pay close attention to the message as it came originally from Jesus through the apostles and any message that deviates from that is to be considered anathema as stated clearly by Paul in *Gal 1:8-9 But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. <sup>9</sup>As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.*

In verse four the writer continues emphasizing the critical importance that this message is genuinely from God. God bore witness with the apostles to authenticate the message by signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Greek word translated “signs” is “semeia” and this word is used often by John’s gospel to signify the spiritual meaning of a message. Such signs were not meaningless power displays but pointed to truths beyond themselves. The

miracles also signified that the message was of God. By “wonders” the writer means that no human could produce them and that they were clearly of God in a marvelous demonstration of His power over creation. We cannot know if the writer meant that “gifts of the Holy Spirit” means gifts given by the Holy Spirit to work through the apostles or if he means particular acts separately done by the Holy Spirit. Either meaning is clear that the Holy Spirit was involved in authenticating the message. He ends this sentence by declaring that God has done this great work entirely according to His will and so must be taken in extreme seriousness. God has already provided all the proof required for the legitimacy of His message and no further signs should be expected.

**Heb 2:5-7 For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking. <sup>6</sup>But one has testified somewhere, saying, "What is man, that Thou remembered him? Or the son of man, that Thou art concerned about him? <sup>7</sup>Thou hast made him for a little while lower than the angels; Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, And hast appointed him over the works of Thy hands; <sup>8</sup>Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. "For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.**

The Greek word translated “the world” is “en oikoumenen” and normally means the inhabited land. The Greeks also meant by it a land occupied by the original people inhabiting the land or those who were intended to occupy the land rather than by people who conquered the land (the barbarians). It was also used later to mean the Roman Empire. It is unusual for this word to refer to the Messianic Age but in context the author clearly means the world in the future that will be settled by God’s chosen people at the End Times. He says that this land has never been intended to be controlled by angels. The quotation is from:

*Psalm 8:3-6 When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, The moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; <sup>4</sup>What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him? And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him? <sup>5</sup>Yet Thou hast made him a little lower than God, And dost crown him with glory and majesty! <sup>6</sup>Thou dost make him to rule over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet,*

In saying “one has testified”, he means that what follows is to be taken extremely seriously. His writing style is curious in that he certainly must know the origin of the saying for he quotes it exactly except that he omits the first part of Psa 8:6. It helps greatly in interpreting psalms to know that parallelism (see the end of this discussion of chapter 2 for information on parallelism in Scripture) is often used and is certainly used here in verse 4 where “man” and “son of man” means the same thing and one cannot use this to interpret the writer as using the “son of man” to refer to Jesus. In this psalm then, the “son of man” just means one with the characteristics of man (man and his descendants) and does not refer to Jesus. The term “son of man” is often used in the OT to refer to a man and not specifically to Jesus such as the following:

*Jer 49:33 "And Hazor will become a haunt of jackals, A desolation forever; No one will live there, Nor will a son of man reside in it."*

*Ezekiel 2:1 Then He said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak with you!"*

*Ezekiel 2:6 "And you, son of man, neither fear them nor fear their words, though thistles and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions; neither fear their words nor be dismayed at their presence, for they are a rebellious house.*

*Ezekiel 3:1 Then He said to me, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel."*

Some people say that the psalm is referring to Jesus as the Son of Man referenced in Dan 7 but this psalm was written about 500 years before the book of Daniel was written so that is not possible. It is best to utilize good hermeneutics and not try to force some interpretation on a verse.

In verse 6, to say that God remembers means that He has now begun to act on behalf of something or someone. God clearly is concerned about man and is sovereignly acting for his benefit in creation. Notice that in Heb 2:7 the author says "lower than the angels" quoting Psa 8:5 that reads "lower than God". The Greek word translated angels and God is "lohim" and not "Elohim". The Septuagint (LXX) translates this word "angels" and that is the translation used by the author of Hebrews. The NAS translates the word as "God". The writer is saying that God has placed man just a bit lower than the angels in his current state but God has crowned him with honor and placed him in authority over God's works. Man thus has a supreme position in creation as originally stated by Moses:

*Gen 1:28 And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

The author continues discussing man's role in creation in verse 8 and does not migrate to discussing the role of Jesus until verse 9. Mistranslating "son of man" in the psalm as discussed above causes some confusion, but the original role of man was to be in total authority over creation. After The Fall, the total subjection of everything to man was lost.

*Gen 3:17-19 <sup>17</sup>Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. <sup>18</sup>Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you shall eat the plants of the field; <sup>19</sup>By the sweat of your face You shall eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return. "*

So now we do not see this total subjection of creation to man. But notice that the author uses the Greek word "oupo" in Heb 2:8 that is translated "not yet" and that gives hope for the future role of man in creation. We can all look forward to the time when the "thorns and thistles" will not be

constantly interfering with our work in creation. This will come only at the second coming of Jesus Christ when worldly order under His authority will be established forever and man's rule will be restored under Him.

**Heb 2:9 But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.**

The author now advances to discussing the role of Jesus in creation. Since he clearly states that he is now discussing Jesus we should not be confused about the previous statements concerning the role of man in creation. Now the author is saying that Jesus has fulfilled the place of man depicted by the psalmist by His work involving His death and resurrection so that He is now crowned with glory and honor in fulfillment of the psalmist's vision. Jesus fulfilled God's purpose by tasting death for everyone. Tasting death is not the same as dying for when one tastes something it can still be rejected. If Jesus had not been resurrected then the author could have just said that "He might die". But in saying that Jesus tasted death He leaves room for the temporary nature of that death state and Jesus' resurrection. Be careful to not think that it is being said here that Jesus did not physically die for He did, but it was not a permanent state for Him. The grace of God is a foundational concept in the Christian worldview and it is proper that the author used it here in reference to the completion of the work of Jesus for man.

*Eph 1:22-23 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup>which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.*

The word translated "everyone" in Heb 2:9 is in the neuter in the original language and can mean "everything". Therefore it is by the sacrifice of Jesus that all of creation will one day be redeemed. Paul spoke of the suffering of all of creation awaiting the second coming of Christ: *Rom 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.*

**Heb 2:10-13 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. <sup>11</sup>For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, <sup>12</sup>saying, "I will proclaim Thy name to My brethren, In the midst of the congregation I will sing Thy praise." <sup>13</sup>And again, "I will put My trust in Him." And again, "Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me."**

The beginning of this sentence finishes the preceding discussion since it begins with the word "for". The word "Him" here refers to God the Father. To say that His grace that caused the Son to die for God's chosen people is fitting for the Father is because the result is a perfect fit to

God's character. After all, it was God's plan from before the foundation of the world that Jesus should die and receive the just wrath of God for our sins and thereby Jesus would be the only author of our salvation:

*Eph 1:4-6 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love <sup>5</sup>He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, <sup>6</sup>to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.*

It may seem strange to say that the perfection of Jesus was done through suffering until we realize that the use of the word "perfect" here does not imply any imperfection in the Lord. Perfecting in this case means completing in that a flower is the completion of the bud. The suffering of Jesus was a necessary step in the salvation of God's chosen people.

Verse 11 tells us that Jesus and the chosen people of God from all ages come from the Father so that all of those people are of the same family: the family of God. This is another statement of the humanity of Jesus, which is necessary for Him to be the author of salvation for God's people. It is only those who are sanctified through the work of Jesus Christ who are truly brothers in the sense used in this verse and is consistent with: *John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,*

The writer of Hebrews in verse 12 quotes Jesus as delivering a portion of a Psalm: *Psalm 22:22 I will tell of Thy name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise Thee.* In NT times, the assembly is the gathered group of Christians and Jesus is proclaiming the name of the Father to all the sanctified people of God. Telling the name is a declaration of the character, so Jesus is praising the nature of God who planned the sanctification process from before the foundation of the world. The author continues this thought pattern with verse 13 with two more OT quotations: *Isaiah 8:17-18 And I will wait for the Lord who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him. <sup>18</sup>Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.*

All of Isaiah 8:17 is equivalent to the Hebrew author's statement of putting trust in God and the second quotation is closer to the first part of Isaiah 8:18. The author is pointing out that Jesus put His trust totally in the Father for the fulfillment of all of His work of salvation. Jesus demonstrates this trust just before His crucifixion as recorded in: *Matt 26:39 And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt."* The second quotation reflects that Jesus and the people to be sanctified by His work on earth are all given by the Father so that the family one day will be complete. The oneness of Jesus with the chosen people of God is firmly identified.

**Heb 2:14-15 Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the**

**power of death, that is, the devil; <sup>15</sup>and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.**

The author completes the identification of the natural human relationship between Jesus and those chosen to be sanctified. All of the children certainly share the same flesh and blood and so Jesus took upon Himself the same flesh and blood while never losing His divinity. Ultimately it is God who rules over death:

*Job 2:6 So the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life."*

*Luke 12:5 "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!"*

However death entered the world through the sin of Adam in yielding to the temptation of Satan: *Rom 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—*

Although the devil does exercise power in death, the resurrection of Jesus and His promise of everlasting life removes any fear of death to those sanctified through His work:

*1Cor 15:54-57 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. <sup>55</sup>O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" <sup>56</sup>The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; <sup>57</sup>but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Those who are not in Christ still fear death and are in slavery to that fear all of their lives. Those who are brothers of Jesus Christ as described above do not have such a fear and know that after physical death is eternal life with Him.

**Heb 2:16-18 For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. <sup>17</sup>Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup>For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.**

In context the author is saying that Jesus (the first "He" in verse 16) did not take on the form of angels so that He (Jesus) could assist them. The "He" in the second clause of verse 16 is the Father. So the Father gives help to Jesus, as the descendant of Abraham. Jesus took on the form of man as a Jewish descendent of Abraham but, of course, He did not do His work only for the Jews but for all chosen people. Verse 16 is speaking of Jesus' incarnation and verse 17 speaks of the purpose of His incarnation. The author states that Jesus' work was according to the instructions and ultimate plan of the Father. Jesus was in perfect obedience to the Father as He took upon Himself the form of man for the purpose of purifying from sin the chosen people of God. The two terms merciful and faithful describe the high work of Jesus. Hebrews is the only book in the NT where the role of high priest is attributed to Jesus. The author does not explain

the term here but will elaborate later. He may have in mind the fulfillment of the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement for which the duties of the High Priest were primary. He makes it clear that the duty of Jesus was in the service of God for He is sent to fulfill the salvation purpose of God for His chosen people. Propitiation is a translation of the Greek word “hilaskesthai” and it means to take away the wrath of God. The sins of people has the clear result of bringing on the wrath of God:

*Rom 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,*

But Jesus became sin on our behalf so that He took the wrath of God that we deserved:

*2Cor 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Simultaneously the righteousness of Jesus was put into our account (both actions being what we call double imputation) so that the work of propitiation was perfectly accomplished by Jesus.

This work was done for us without our earning anything of merit for we were sinners (one who practices sin) when the propitiation was completed for us:

*Rom 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup>Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. <sup>10</sup>For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

After this action of God on our behalf we are no longer sinners but saints in the sight of God and we then became slaves of righteousness and no longer slaves to sin:

*Rom 6:18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.*

Those not included covered by this act of propitiation have the wrath of God remaining on them:

*John 3:36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."*

The last verse of this chapter gives us great comfort. The suffering of Jesus in reference to His temptations refers not only to the cross but to all of His incarnation. The trials He endured on earth would have been much more offensive to Him than they would be to us and all of them are involved in His sufferings. Our Lord totally understands our sufferings and our temptations for only someone who has gone through the same ordeals can truly empathize with us today. We know that Jesus went through the same kinds of sufferings we face and so is truly our great High Priest and the Holy Spirit our perfect counselor.

### **Parallelism in Scripture**

About one-third of the OT is poetry and Hebrew poetry often includes parallelism. These can be characterized as synonymous, antithetic, or synthetic parallelism. In synonymous parallelism the second line of a stanza repeats the content of the first but using different words such as Psalm 103:10:



He has not dealt with us according to our sins,  
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

In antithetic parallelism the second line contrasts with the first line such as Psalm 37:21:

The wicked borrows and does not pay back,  
But the righteous is gracious and gives.

In synthetic parallelism the second line completes or expands on the first line like Psalm 14:2:

The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men,  
To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God.

Recognizing the use of parallelism in Hebrew poetry can give us the correct interpretation of some particular words such as “son of man” in Heb 2:6.