

HEBREWS CHAPTER 1

THEME OF THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS: GOD'S FINAL REVELATION IS IN JESUS CHRIST.

God spoke previously through the prophets, but in these last days he spoke through Jesus Christ”.

[I] THE FINALITY OF CHRISTIANITY (1:1 - 2:18)

1. Christ is God. He is God's final revelation to man (1:1-3).

a. Jesus Christ is God's final word to man (1:1-2a).

i) Divine revelation in the Bible is progressive.

The book of Hebrews begins with “the finality of the Christian Faith” (Hebrews ch. 1-2). The theme of the book of Hebrews is, “God's final revelation is in Jesus Christ”: God spoke previously through the prophets, but in these last days he spoke through Jesus Christ”.

God's special revelation was given in two stages: first to the fathers through the prophets, and finally in his Son. These two stages of divine revelation correspond to the Old Testament and the New Testament respectively. Divine revelation is thus progressive, not from less true to more true, but from promise to fulfilment and from shadow to reality.

The believers during the Old Testament period did not experience the fulfilment of the divine promise in which they had trusted, because with the believers of the New Testament in mind, God had made a better plan, so that only in company with the New Testament believers, the Old Testament believers would reach their perfection (Hebrews 11:13,39,40).

ii) The Old Testament is the time of promise.

The earlier stage of revelation was given in a variety of ways: God spoke in his mighty works of mercy and judgement, and made known the meaning and purpose of these works through his servants, the prophets. They were admitted into his secret council and learned his plans in advance (Jeremiah 23:18,22; Amos 3:7). Priest (Moses), prophet (Isaiah), poet (David) and king (Solomon) were in their several ways the spokesmen of God. Yet all words of God and all his acts in the period before the first coming of Christ did not add up to the fullness of what God had to say and what God still had to do. God's Word (revelation) was not completely spoken until the first coming of Christ.

iii) The New Testament is the time of fulfilment and the consummation of the ages.

But when Christ came, the word spoken through him was indeed God's final word. All the promises that God has ever made (including those to the first people groups in the world, Genesis 1-11, and later to Israel) meet in Jesus Christ with the answering “Yes!”, which seals their fulfilment to God's people and evokes from them an answering “Amen!” (2 Corinthians 1:20).

“The last days” is the period between the first and the second coming of Christ. The following events take place “in the last days”:

1 Peter 1:20. The first coming of Christ. He was revealed “in these last times”

(φανερωθεντος δε επ εσχρατου των χρονων).

Hebrews 1:2. God's final revelation. “In these last days” God spoke to us by his Son”.

(επ εσχρατου των ημερων τουτων ελαλησεν ημιν εν υιω)

Hebrews 9:26. Christ's sacrificial death. “Once at the end of the ages” he did away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.

(απαξ επι συντελεια των αιωνιων ... αθετησιν της αμαρτιας)

Acts 2:17. The outpouring of the Spirit. He was poured out “in the last days”.

(εκχεω ... εν ταις εσχραταις ημεραις)

John 6:39,40. The resurrection of the dead. I will raise him up “at the last day”.

(αναστησω αυτον εν τη εσχρατη ημερα)

John 12:48. The final judgement. Christ's words will condemn him “ at the last day”.

(κρινει ... εν τη εσχρατη ημερα)

The divine revelation progresses up to Jesus Christ, but there is no progression of revelation beyond Jesus Christ! God spoke through Jesus Christ “in the end of these days” (επ εσχρατου των ημερων τουτων)(H: “in the latter end of the days”/ “in the end-time”/ “ultimately”), which is the Old Testament phrase that denotes the period of time in which the words of the Old Testament prophets will be fulfilled (Genesis 49:1; Deuteronomy 4:30; Isaiah 2:2; Jeremiah 30:24; Ezekiel 38:16; Daniel 10:14; Hosea 3:5; Micha 4:1).

The plural “ages” may point to “the intersection of the two ages when Christ appeared”, or generally to “the climax of history” (1 Peter 1:20). The phrase means that the appearance of Jesus Christ “once for all at the end of the age” has inaugurated that time of fulfilment “The fullness of time had come” (ηλθεν το πληρωμα του χρονου)(Galatians

4:4). He appeared once for all “at the consummation of the ages” to speak God’s final word, to fulfil God’s promises and to complete God’s work of salvation. It is not that Jesus Christ happened to come at the time of fulfilment, but that his coming made that time “the time of fulfilment”! God’s previous spokesmen, the prophets, were his servants. But for the proclamation of his last word to man God has chosen his Son.

iv) Jesus Christ is God’s final word to man.

Because God has no greater Messenger than his Son (cf. Matthew 22:33-44; Luke 2:34), he has no further message beyond the gospel. God speaks his final word in and through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2)! Jesus Christ is clearly the last and final prophet that God promised in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 18:18-19). He is the One through whom God will restore everything. He is the One through whom God will bless all peoples on earth. Anyone from every religious background that does not listen to Jesus Christ will be completely cut off from among God’s people. Jesus Christ was sent to turn you from your wicked ways (Acts 3:21-26)!

b. The superiority of Jesus Christ (1:2b-3)

In Hebrews 1:2b-4, seven facts are stated about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, which bring out his greatness and show why the revelation given to him is the highest revelation that God can give.

i) Jesus Christ is the heir of all things (1:2b).

God appointed Christ “heir” (κληρονόμος) of all things.

- Christ’s inheritance is not limited to the earth (Psalm 2:8), but includes the whole universe (Ephesians 1:10,20-23) and particularly “the world to come” (Hebrews 2:5), that is, the new world-order inaugurated by the enthronement of Christ (Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 5:5-14). From his throne in heaven Christ reigns over “the world of realities”, which replaced the preceding world of shadows (Hebrews 8:5; 10:1). It is not yet visibly present in all its fullness, for its consummation awaits the second coming of Christ, when he will bring his people into the final blessings of the salvation he procured for them (Hebrews 9:28; cf. Romans 8:18-22).

- Christ’s inheritance is not limited to the promised land, Canaan. In the Old Testament, the land that God promised to Abraham (Genesis 15:18) stretched from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates. In the New Testament, the inheritance of Christ and his people is extended to include “the well-founded city” or “the better country”. The patriarchs did not regard the land Mesopotamia they left as their homeland. Neither did they regard the land Canaan they came to as their homeland, but trekked through it “as strangers in a foreign country, living in tents”. Their pilgrim’s progress through this world had as its goal a home elsewhere. The truth is that their true homeland was not on earth at all! The better country on which they had set their hopes was not the transient Jerusalem and Canaan, but the heavenly country (Hebrews 11:10-16).

- The earthly Canaan into which the first Joshua led the people of Israel, was not “the true rest of God” (Hebrews 4:8-9). The earthly Jerusalem and earthly Canaan were but temporary object-lessons pointing to the everlasting rest of all believers. The earthly sojourn is but a pilgrim’s journey for all believers (cf. 1 Peter 2:11). Abraham kept his eyes fixed on the final manifestation of the kingdom of God “in the time of fulfilment”. For the writer of Hebrews that is “the heavenly Jerusalem” (Hebrews 12:22-24,28), the kingdom of God in the spiritual and eternal order, which is now effectively made accessible by the completion of Christ’s high priestly work and to which all Old Testament and all New Testament believers come to be enrolled as citizens (cf. Philippians 3:20).

ii) Jesus Christ is the creator of all things (1:2c).

God made the universe (lit. the ages) (αιωνας) through Christ. He created the universe (lit. the ages) by his word (ρημα)(11:3). Hence God is “the King of the universe” (lit. the King of the ages)(1 Tim 1:17). “The ages” (αιωνας) refers to the the world of space (cf. Exodus 15:18 LXX). The whole created universe of space and time was brought about by the agency of God’s Son (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). Christ, as the Word (λογος) or Wisdom (σοφια) of God, is acknowledged as the Father’s agent in the work of creation (John 1:1-3). This conception of Christ is based on the Old Testament (Proverbs 8:22-31) and on a very early Christian identification arising in all probability from the fact that Christ on occasion actually spoke in the role of Divine Wisdom (John 1:1-18). Christ introduces himself as “the beginning of God’s creation” (η αρχη της κτισεως του θεου), that is, as the Source, Creator and Ruler of the whole creation (Revelation 3:14).

iii) Jesus Christ is the radiance of God’s glory (1:3a).

Christ is “the radiance” of God’s glory (απαυγασμα της δοξης).

This includes both the active visible radiance shining forth from the source of light, which reveals God, but also the passive visible reflection, which is of the same substance (essential divine nature) as God. Just as the radiance of the sun reaches this earth, so in Christ the glorious light of God shines into the hearts of people (2 Corinthians 4:6; John 1:4; 14:9). Jesus Christ is the supreme and visible revelation of God, his nature, his thoughts, his words and his deeds (Colossians 1:15).

iv) Jesus Christ is the exact representation of God’s being (1:3b).

Christ is “the exact representation of the being of God” or “the very visible image of the divine substance” (χαρακτηρ της υποστασεως).

The word “χαρακτηρ” (cf. the word ‘character’)(from the verb “χαρασσω” in the sense “to engrave”) is used especially of the impression or stamp on coins and seals. Just as the image on a coin exactly corresponds to the device on the die, so the Son of God bears the very stamp of God the Father’s nature”. It expresses this truth more emphatically than the word “εικων” (image, likeness, form, appearance), which is used to denote Christ as “the image” of God

(2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15). Just as the glory of God is really in the radiance, so “the substance” (υποστασις) of God is really in Christ (Colossians 1:19; 2:9). Jesus Christ is the “impress” or “the exact representation and embodiment” of God’s being. What God essentially is, is made manifest in Christ. To see Christ is to see what God the Father is like (John 14:9)!

v) Jesus Christ is the upholder of the created universe (1:3c).

Christ “sustains or upholds all things by his powerful or enabling word” (φερων τε τα παντα τω ρηματι της δυναμεως αυτου)(A adjectival genitive in Hebrew).

The creative utterance, which called the created universe into being (Hebrews 11:3), requires as its complement that sustaining utterance by which the created universe is maintained in being (Colossians 1:17). He upholds the universe, not like Atlas supporting a dead weight on his shoulders, but as One who carries all things forward on their appointed course.

vi) Jesus Christ the saviour of sins (1:3d).

Christ “made purification for sins” (καθαρισμον των αμαρτιων ποιησαμενος).

The writer passes from the cosmic functions of Jesus Christ to his personal relations with mankind, to his work as his people’s high priest, which is further elaborated in the book of Hebrews. The fact that Christ created and still maintains the universe may cause awesome wonder in us. But the fact that his grace provided a remedy for the defilement of sin by freely offering himself up to God on our behalf calls forth a sense of personal indebtedness which the contemplation of divine activity on the cosmic scale could never evoke. The underlying emphasis is here that Christ accomplished something incapable of achievement by anyone else.

vii) Jesus Christ is the ruler of the universe (1:3e).

Christ “sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven” (εκαθισεν εν δεξια της μεγαλωσυνης εν υψηλοις).

“The majesty in heaven” is an expression for God (cf. “the Mighty One” or η δυναμις in Mark 14:62). Psalm 110:1 promised that Christ would sit at the right hand of God. This promise went into fulfilment in the resurrection, ascension and enthronement of Christ after his death on the cross (Luke 22:69).

That no literal location is intended was as well understood by Christians in the apostolic age as well as Christians today. God has no physical right hand or a material throne where the ascended Christ sits beside him. To them and us the phrase denotes the exaltation and supremacy of Christ (cf. Ephesians 4:10; Philippians 2:9). Christ as *seated* High Priest is contrasted with the priests of the Old Testament, who remained *standing* because their sacrificial service never came to an end. Psalm 110:1 was addressed to a prince of the house of David, who evidently had the prerogative to be seated in the divine presence (cf. 2 Samuel 7:18; cf. Ezekiel’s vision of the new commonwealth or kingdom, Ezekiel 44:3). Christ’s exaltation to the right hand of God in itself marks Christ out as being superior to the angels. His superior name is “Son”, which he had in his humiliation (Hebrews 5:8; Matthew 3:17) as well as from eternity (Hebrews 1:2). He inherited the name “Son” as he inherits all things, by the eternal appointment of God the Father.

2. Christ as God is superior to angels (1:4-14).

In Hebrews chapters 1-2, Jesus Christ is compared to the angels. Christ became as much superior (κρειττων) to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

The comparative word “superior or better” (κρειττων) is found 13 times in Hebrews. It contrast Christ and his new order with what went before his incarnation and exaltation: a better name (1:4); better things (6:9); the better or greater person (7:7); a better hope (7:19); a better covenant (7:22 8:6); better promises (8:6); better sacrifices (9:23); a better possession (10:34); a better country (11:16); a better resurrection (11:35); a better foresight or plan (11:40); a better word (12:24).

The various Old Testament quotations firstly shows that the final message of God, which was communicated by God the Son, is safeguarded by even more majestic sanctions than those that attended the law, which was communicated by angels (Hebrews 2:2). And secondly it shows that the new world over which the Son reigns as Mediator far surpasses the old world in which various nations were assigned to angels for administration (Hebrews 2:5; cf. Daniel 10:13,20,21; 12:1). This emphasis of Christ’s superiority to angels was probably given to avoid the Hebrews from being carried away by all kinds of strange teachings (Hebrews 13:9). Remember, a false doctrine of worshipping angels had also been introduced among the Colossian Christians (Colossians 2:18).

In Hebrews 1:4-14, seven Old Testament quotations corroborate that Jesus Christ is superior to angels.

a. Jesus Christ has a position and title in heaven as “Son of God” that is far superior to that of the angels (1:5).

Christ receives the title “Son of God”.

i) The first quotation is from Psalm 2:7, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father” (υιός μου εἶσθ, ἐγὼ σημερον γεγεννηκά σε). (cf. Matthew 3:17). Though angels may collectively be called “the sons of God” (H: bene ha-Elohim)(Genesis 6:2,4; Job 1:6; 2:1), no one of them is ever called “the Son of God” in terms like these, which single the person addressed out and give him a status apart. The divine decree of Psalm 2:7b-9 may have preserved the text of a coronation liturgy used by the Davidic dynasty, but later it was believed that these words would be most fully realised in the Messiah of David’s line who would rise up in the time of fulfilment (cf. Jeremiah 23:5-6; Ezekiel 37:24-28). Nevertheless, in Psalm 2 itself the Lord’s Anointed (the Messiah) cites these words as the ground of his confidence in the face of the plotting of his enemies. At the annunciation of the birth of Christ, the angel Gabriel said to Mary, “He will be great and will be called ‘the Son of the Most High’ (Luke 1:32-33). Most important, at the baptism of Christ, the voice of God from heaven said, “You are my Son whom I love; with you I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11). The New Testament clearly views Psalm 2 as a messianic Psalm (Acts 4:25- 26; 13:33).

The context shows that the word “today” refers to the exaltation and enthronement of Christ (cf. Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 1:13). That was the occasion when Jesus Christ was vested with his royal dignity as ‘Son of God’. Romans 1:4 teaches that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead was the occasion when the Holy Spirit instated Christ in the position of sovereignty and invested him with all power in heaven and on earth, something that far surpassed everything that could be said of Christ during his incarnate state (cf. Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-22). The eternity of Christ’s Sonship is not brought into question by this view. *Although Jesus Christ was the Son of God from everlasting, he entered into the full exercise of his sovereign power after he proved his complete obedience by his death.*

ii) The second quotation is from 2 Samuel 7:14, “I will be his Father, and he will be my Son” (ἐγὼ εσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα, καὶ αὐτὸς εἶσται μοι εἰς υἱόν). Although David’s immediate successor, Solomon, built a temple for God, God’s promises to David with regard to his son and heir were not exhausted in Solomon. While the author of 2 Samuel 7:12-16 speaks of “David’s son”, the author of 1 Chronicles 17:11-14 clearly understood these promises to be fulfilled in “one of David’s sons”. The words of the angel Gabriel to Mary in Luke 1:32-33, “The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end” surely fulfils these promises. Also Romans 1:3 teaches that the Son of God according to his weak human nature was a descendant of David.

See addendum: “Jesus Christ is the Son of God”.

b. Jesus Christ is the First on earth and angels must worship him (1:6).

i) The third quotation is from the Greek Old Testament translation (the Septuagint = LXX) of Deuteronomy 32:43, “Let all God’s angels worship him”. While in the Old Testament the angels are called to worship God (the LORD, JaHWeH), in the New Testament they are called to worship Jesus Christ! They are called to do this from the time of his introduction to the world as ‘the Son of God’, that is, at his exaltation and enthronement as sovereign ruler of the inhabited universe (Hebrews 2:5; Ephesians 1:20-22; 1 Peter 3:22; Revelation 5:6-14).

ii) Jesus Christ is called “the firstborn” (πρωτοτοκος) because *he exists before all creation*; because he is *the first of the new humanity* and because he is *the first of God’s New Testament community*.

Christ is likewise “the firstborn over all creation” (Colossians 1:15; cf. Romans 8:22) or “the firstborn of every creature” (cf. Romans 8:39). It means that Christ is before all things; that Christ created all things; that only Christ is the goal and significance of all things; that Christ hold all things together (Colossians 1:16-17). Christ is the One to whom belongs the right and dignity of the Firstborn in relation to every creature (cf. Psalm 89:27). All must honour the Son as they honour the Father (John 5:23). This also means that the Son himself cannot be a creature, the first in a very long line of creatures. Christ is before every creature, distinct from every creature and highly exalted above every creature!

Christ is also called “the firstborn from among the dead” (Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5), because he is the first to be resurrected, never to die again. He is the path-breaker, who holds the keys of Death and Hades (Revelation 1:17-18).

The sentence, “When God brings his firstborn into the world” does not refer to the first coming (the incarnation) and also not to his second coming. It refers to Christ being brought or introduced into the world as ‘the Son of God’, thus to his exaltation and enthronement as sovereign Lord over “the inhabited universe” (ἡ οἰκουμένη). Hebrews 2:5 says, “God has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking, not to angels” (but to Christ) (οὐ γὰρ ἀγγελοῖς

υπεταξεν την οικουμενην την μελλουσαν, περι ης λαλουμεν). Hebrews 2:5 refers back to Hebrews 1:6. Before the first coming of Christ, God subjected the world to the government of angels (Deuteronomy 32:8 LXX). By the exaltation and enthronement of Christ at his right hand, God inaugurated the new world-order (cf. Mt 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-22). “The world to come” (2:5) is practically synonymous with “the coming age” (6:5).

c. Jesus Christ is addressed as “God”, but angels are just servants (1:7).

The fourth quotation is from Psalm 104:4, “He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire”.

In Hebrews 1:7-8 we read that angels, although they have a high place in the divine administration of the universe, are far inferior to the supreme position given to Jesus Christ. While in the Old Testament (Psalm 104:4; cf. 148:8), the natural elements, wind and fire, are God’s servants and fulfil the commands of God, in the New Testament the angels execute God’s commands with the swiftness of wind and the strength of fire.

d. Jesus Christ is eternal, but angels are temporary (1:8-12).

i) The fifth quotation is from Psalm 45:6-7, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.” The word “but” shows that the fifth quotation is set in contrast to the fourth quotation.

Psalm 45 celebrates a royal wedding and the poet first addresses the bridegroom and then the bride. The bridegroom was probably a king of the house of David. The author of Hebrews applies Psalm 45 to the Davidic Messiah. The marginal alternative, “Your throne is God” is quite unconvincing, because Christ never sits on God, but always at God’s right hand. The LXX and the author of Hebrews regard “God” twice in the vocative. The king is not simply addressed in the hyperbolic language characteristic of oriental courts, but the king of the house of David is regarded as the vice-regent of the God of Israel. The king belongs to a dynasty to which God has made special promises bound up with the accomplishment of his purpose in the world. What was partially true of king David or of any of the historic kings in David’s line would be realised in its fullness in the Messiah, in whom all the promises and ideals associated with David’s dynasty would be embodied. Now this Messiah had come and he may be addressed, not only as “the Son of God”, as the Messiah in king David’s line, but as “God”, as the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of God’s being.

Already in Isaiah 9:6 the Messiah would be called “Mighty God” (H: El Gibbor), the same as what the LORD (JHWH) was called in Isaiah 10:20-23.

All things created, including angels, are subject to time, change and decay. But the throne of the Son of God endures for ever and ever (cf. Isaiah 9:7). The righteousness and justice which are the foundation of God’s throne (Psalm 89:14) are equally the foundation of the Messiah’s throne (cf. Isaiah 9:7; cf. 11:5).

“The anointing with the oil of joy” refers not so much to Christ’s inauguration as the Messiah when God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and power (Acts 10:38) as to “the joy set before him” (12:2), the joy with which God blessed him at his exaltation and enthronement, thus acknowledging Christ’s vindication of divine justice.

In Psalm 45, “the companions” (μετοχοι) of the king in David’s line may be the kings of neighbouring nations, or members of his own family and court. But in Hebrews 1 the term has special meaning and most likely refers to “the many sons” that Christ saved (2:10) and “made holy” and whom he called “brothers” (2:11). In Hebrews 3:14 they “have become sharers (μετοχοι γεγοναμεν) in Christ”. The joy of Christians is great, but the joy of Christ is even greater!

ii) The sixth quotation is from Psalm 102:25-27, “In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.”

The author of the Psalm is very much aware of the brevity of his own life, with which he contrasts the eternal being of God. In comparison with his own life, the existence of heaven and earth is immense; and yet heaven and earth must also pass away. They had their beginning when God created them, and they will grow old and disappear one day; but the God who created them existed before they did, and he will survive their disappearance. As a man changes his clothes, so God will change the material universe, but he himself remains eternal and unchanging.

The words, “He also says” (και) refers to the words “With regard to the Son” (προς τον υιον)(1:8). Compare the words, “With regard to the angels” (προς τους αγγελους)(1:7). It shows that the author of Hebrews makes God say Hebrews 1:10-12 of the Son. He had already said that God made the universe (αιωνας) through the Son (1:2). While

the angels were but worshipping spectators at the time the earth was founded (Job 38:4-7), the Son was the Father's agent of creation. In contrast to the temporariness of angels, the divine rule of Jesus Christ will last forever.

The words of Psalm 102 are in the LXX translation addressed by God to "the Lord" (κυριε). The LXX translation translates the Hebrew word JaHWeH (LORD) with 'κυριος' (Lord) and understands by that name "the name that is above every name" (Phil 1:9). The New Testament does the same (Mark 1:3). The author of Hebrews is not the only New Testament writer to ascribe to Christ the highest divine names, or to apply to him Old Testament scriptures which in their primary context refer to JaHWeH (the LORD) (Isaiah 45:23 is applied to Christ in Philippians 2:10-11 and Isaiah 8:13 is applied to Christ in 1 Peter 3:15).

e. Jesus Christ sits in the most exalted position, but angels stand before him (1:13-14).

The seventh quotation is from Psalm 110:1, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet". Like the words in Hebrews 1:5, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father", the words in Hebrews 1:13 refer to the king's enthronement and carries with it the promise of victory over all his enemies.

Jesus Christ himself applied these words to himself in Mark 12:36, when he argued that he was not only David's son, but also David's Lord. Jesus Christ himself said at his trial that "you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One" (Mark 14:62). And the apostles preached that after his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ was "exalted to the right hand of God" (Acts 2:33; cf. Acts 7:55-56; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20-22; Colossians 3:1; 1 Peter 3:22; Revelation 3:21)!

The most exalted angels are those whose privilege it is "to stand in the presence of God" (Daniel 7:10; Luke 1:19; Revelation 8:2) in order to promptly and swiftly execute God's commands. But no angel has ever been invited "to sit at God's right hand"! "The right hand" is the place of unique honour.

These angels are different beings from "the world-rulers and elemental spirits" (Romans 8:38; 1 Corinthians 2:8; Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 2:8,15,20), because their influence over the lives of people who have died with Christ has been broken (Colossians 1:13; 2:15).

All angels are but "ministering spirits" (λειτουργικα πνευματα). Although angels are higher than people in the order of creation, they are lower than people in the order of grace, because they serve the heirs of salvation. Their service is especially performed for the benefit of Christians.

The "salvation" here refers to the final salvation: the salvation from pain, sickness, troubles and death at the resurrection (Revelation 21:4) and the salvation from a degenerate world at the renewal of all things (Romans 8:19-21). It is "the salvation that is nearer now than when we first believed" (Romans 13:11) and "the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5). Salvation is a process that begins with regeneration and is completed with the resurrection.

Summary.

1. Hebrews chapter 1 asserts the ascendancy of the Son of God over angels and shows that the Old Testament confirms this testimony.
2. Because God has no greater messenger than his Son, he has no further message beyond the gospel!

ADDENDUM: JESUS CHRIST IS THE SON OF GOD.

1. God's divine nature is unfathomable.

Christians believe in the God of the Bible and in no other god. The God of the Bible is exalted above everyone and everything, sovereign and majestic. The God of the Bible is *Spirit* (not *flesh* of man) and as such is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent.

a. The God of the Bible is unfathomable and therefore no human being can know him or even grasp his divine being (Job 11:7-8). Yet the God of the Bible can be known to the extent that he reveals himself to us.

b. The God of the Bible is Spirit and therefore invisible to the human eyes (John 4:24; 1:18). Yet, the God of the Bible can be seen in Jesus Christ. The God of the Bible took besides his divine nature also the human nature and entered his creation and human history in Jesus Christ (John 1:1,14,18). Jesus Christ is the visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). Colossians 2:9 teaches that the fullness of the divine nature dwells in the body of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

c. The God of the Bible lives in an unapproachable light and no human being can climb up to God by way of keeping the law or by way of a devote religious life. The God of the Bible is so highly exalted that no human being can approach him (1 Timothy 6:16). Yet, the God of the Bible took on the human nature in Jesus Christ and approached us people on earth.

Thus, although the God of the Bible is unfathomable, people can know him to the extent that he has revealed himself in the Bible and in Jesus Christ. And although the God of the Bible is invisible, people can see who he is and what he is like in Jesus Christ. And although the God of the Bible cannot be approached by any human ladders or means, people can have a personal relationship with him, because he approached people on earth and in history through Jesus Christ.

2. Christ is the Son of God in ontological sense.

a. The God of the Bible is the spiritual Father of Jesus Christ in an ontological sense: God the Father and God the Son have the same divine nature. God the Father is not the physical father of Jesus Christ as some enemies falsely allege. The God of the Bible is the spiritual Father of Jesus Christ in the sense that he himself took on the human nature in Jesus Christ. The Bible clearly calls the God of the Bible "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:3; Ephesians 1:3). The God of the Bible is "the God and Father of Jesus Christ" in the sense that he took on the human nature in Jesus Christ and revealed himself to people in Jesus Christ. The relationship between God the Father and God the Son is *never a physical relationship*, as some enemies allege, *but is always a spiritual relationship!* Every god of every religion that is not the Father of Jesus Christ is not the God of the Bible! The Old Testament prophets called Jesus Christ "the Mighty God" and "the Everlasting Father" (Isaiah 9:6). And in the New Testament Jesus says that God the Father and God the Son are one (John 10:30). The Christian Church believes in ONE God, in one divine nature, who revealed himself to people within creation and within human history as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. As God the Father, the God of the Bible is the Eternal God and the Creator and Origin of everything. As God the Son, God took on the human nature and revealed himself visibly to people. And as God the Holy Spirit, God dwells in the hearts and lives of Christians to give them new life, wisdom and power.

b. The God of the Bible is also the spiritual Father of Christians, not in an ontological sense, but only in a spiritual sense. Christians are never 'God' and never become 'God', but are always the creatures of God. Before people believe in Jesus Christ, they are the enemies of the God of the Bible (Romans 5:10). But after they believe in Jesus Christ, they become the spiritual sons and daughters of God or the spiritual children of God (Ephesians 1:5). And as the spiritual children of God they are transformed and more and more acquire the same spiritual characteristics as the God of the Bible, like love, holiness and righteousness (Ephesians 4:24; 2 Peter 1:4). This one God and Father of the Bible exercises control from heaven *over* all these Christians, works out his plan for all Christians *through* Jesus Christ and dwells *in* all Christians through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:6). The unity of the Christian Church arises from the unity of the God of the Bible. The unity of the Christian Church is demonstrated by Christians all over the world, because they worship the same God of the Bible, they have the same Saviour of their sins, they have the same Holy Spirit, who dwells in them, and they have the same faith, the same love and the same hope!

3. Christ is not the physical, but the spiritual Son of God.

a. The Son of God.

The term “Son of God” does NOT refer to a common misunderstanding that Jesus is a physical son of God. It rather expresses the thought that the invisible God himself took on the human nature and entered into his creation and into human history in and through Jesus. The Bible speaks of three kinds of “sons”.

b. The term “son” refers to a physical son or descendant.

John 3:6 says, “Flesh gives birth to flesh.” It says that a physical child is born from physical parents. Although Jesus was born as a physical person from his physical mother, *the virgin* Mary, his physical nature was NOT derived from any physical father. Jesus was not begotten in any physical sense, because God does not have a body. The physical body of Christ is not God’s body. The Holy Spirit created the physical body of Jesus (Luke 1:35). Jesus Christ is from all eternity God (John 1:1,18), but took on the human nature and entered his created world and its history in time (John 1:14). Jesus Christ possesses the human nature, but he was absolutely without sin (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15).

c. The term “son” refers to a spiritual son.

John 3:6 also says, “The Spirit gives birth to spirit.” The Bible clearly differentiates between a physical son and a spiritual son. Jesus is not the physical son of God, but the spiritual Son of God. Jesus Christ possesses the essential divine nature of God. Jesus Christ is the visible radiance of God’s glory (essential divine attributes) and the exact representation of God’s divine being (Hebrews 1:3). Christ is the visible image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). All the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form in Christ (Colossians 2:9).

d. The term “son” refers to a symbolic son.

Luke 16:8 calls the Christians “sons of the light”, which means that their essential characteristics are “light” and they belong to people that walk in the light. Likewise, Jesus Christ is called “the Son of God”, because he expresses the essential divine nature and characteristics of God.

Conclusion. Thus, the term “the Son of God” expresses the fact that the *invisible* God revealed himself in the *visible* God by taking on the human nature through the virgin Mary and entering into this creation and this human history.

4. Christ is the physical son of Mary, but not of God.

The word ‘γεννέω’ has three meanings:

a. Beget, becoming a father: in a physical and in a figurative (spiritual) sense.

i) Physical meaning: ‘to beget’, ‘to become the physical father’.

In the genealogies (cf. Gen 4:18 onwards). Passive: ‘begotten’, ‘that which is conceived in her’ (Mt 1:20); “begotten by one man” (Heb 11:12), “begotten by adultery or out of wedlock” (Jn 8:41); “you were altogether conceived in sin” (Jn 9:34).

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So he holy one to be born (to be conceived) will be called the Son of God” (πνευμα αγιον επελευσεται επι σε, και δυναμις υψιστου επισκιασει σοι. διο και το γεννωμενον αγιον κληθησεται υιος θεου) (participle present passive). Although Jesus was born as a physical person from his physical mother, *the virgin* Mary, his physical nature was NOT derived from any physical father. Jesus was not begotten in any physical sense, because God does not have a body. The physical body of Christ is not God’s body. The Holy Spirit exerted divine influence and created the physical body of Jesus (Luke 1:35).

ii) Figurative (spiritual) meaning: ‘to become the spiritual father’ - the influence exerted by one person on another.

By my preaching the gospel to you, figuratively speaking you became my spiritual children. “Through the gospel I became your father” (δια του ευαγγελια υμας εγεννησα)(indicative aorist active) (1 Cor 4:15).

By receiving Jesus Christ people become ‘born again’ (παλιγγενεσια) or ‘born of God’ (εκ (του) θεου γεννασθαι) (aorist) (Jn 1:13; 1 Jn 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18). Or ‘born from above’ (ανωθεν γεννασθαι) (Jn 3:3).

“Everyone who loves the father (πας ο αγαπων τον γεννησαντα)(God) loves the child

(αγαπα τον γεγεννημενον εξ

αυτου)(Christ or one’s Christian brother) (1 Jn 5:1).

“Today I have become your father” (σημερον γεγεννηκα σε).

b. Bear, becoming a mother: in a physical and in a spiritual sense.

i) Physical meaning: 'to bear', 'to become a mother'.

"Bear a child" (Lk 1:57)(indicative aorist active). The aorist points to that which happens once in history. Passive: 'to be born', 'to come into the world' (Jn 16:21)(subjunctive aorist active). "For this reason I was born" (Jn 18:37) (indicative perfect passive). The perfect tense points to the fact that he now exists in the human nature.

"The language in which we were born" (Act 2:8). "Born a Roman citizen" (Act 22:28).

ii) Figurative (spiritual) meaning: 'to become the spiritual mother' - the influence exerted by the law on people.

"Bear children for slavery" (δουλειαν γεννωσα)(participle present active) (Gal 4:24). The present tense points to that which happens continually.

c. Bring forth, produce, cause.

"Foolish and stupid arguments produce (γεννωσιν)(indicative present active) quarrels" (2 Tim 2:23). The present tense points to that which happens continually.

5. Christ is the only begotten Son of God.

The term "only begotten" (μονογενης) does not refer to physically begetting a child. It means "only", "unique in its kind", "the only example of its category". In John 1:18, this term (μονογενης υιος) does not refer to anything akin to the human world. It does not refer to any beginning somewhere in the past. It is a term that describes Christ's Trinitarian Sonship. In John 3:16 this term (ο μονογενης) proves that Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of the Father *before the incarnation* (before he took on the human nature). In the best and oldest manuscripts of the Bible, John 1:18 says "the only begotten God" (μονογενης Θεος) instead of "the only begotten Son". And because "God" is eternal, the term "only begotten" cannot refer to a beginning.

It must refer to Christ's eternal Trinitarian Sonship. It means that Jesus Christ is the Son of God from all eternity. From all eternity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit existed in this unique relationship to one another. There is only one God (Mark 12:29; "one name", Matthew 28:19) and he is Spirit (John 4:24). Yet the one God revealed himself to us as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). He revealed to us that there is an inner distinction in God's divine nature that surpasses our ability to grasp and demands our obedient submission. No one and no religion knows God the Father except God the Son and those people to whom he chooses to reveal God (Matthew 11:25-27; John 10:15; 17:25-26).

6. Christ as God the Son reveals God the Father.

God the Father says, "I will raise up for them a prophet ... I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account" (Deuteronomy 18:18-19).

The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be cut off from among his people" (Acts 3:22-23)

God the Father says, This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him! " (Matthew 3:17; 17:5).