

Hebrews 2
February 21, 2016

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: If you were trying to describe your salvation to a lost person, why would you call it a “great salvation?” [Let people tag why they believe they have such a great salvation?]

Christ offered this “great salvation” to all who would place their trust in Him and His work on the cross. The question becomes, “*How much do we appreciate the salvation He’s given us?*” Do we take it for granted? Do we regularly thank Him for it? Has it lost its glamour since we initially made our decision?

Transition: If you will recall, we said last week that these Jewish Christians were tired of being persecuted. They were very discouraged and were tempted to return to what was familiar to them – the old sacrificial system. It was starting to look pretty attractive to go back under the Law. So the writer of Hebrews is addressing this issue and works hard to explain how “great” their salvation is! He is going to sell them on how Christ is superior to anything they’ve ever trusted in their past. He is afraid that they are going to drift away from this “great salvation.”

We need to pay attention to what the author shares with us. The last thing we want is to be a “drifter” ourselves! To help you avoid drifting, I want to help you get grounded on why you have obtained a “great salvation.” I am proposing that **all of us CAN deepen our appreciation of our salvation BY understanding the REASONS Jesus’s incarnation made Him superior while making salvation available to us.** Let’s read the author’s opening statements about the Lord’s salvation in general. Someone read Hebrews 2:1-4 please.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.1:

- We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. [Writer’s first exhortation to immature and spiritually sluggish Jewish Christians]

V.2:

- For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment,

V.3:

- how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.

V.4:

- God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q v.1: What is the writer's first concern to the Jewish Christians who had become spiritually sluggish? [They were going to "drift away" if they don't pay close attention to the facts about Jesus and the salvation He provided. He didn't want them to *neglect (not reject) their salvation*]

Q v.1: What do you think the writer meant by the phrase "drifting away?" [Christians who neglect God's Word, prayer, worship with God's people, and other opportunities for growth.]

Q v.2: During OT days, who had the role of delivering God's Word to the Israelites in addition to prophets? [The angels]

Q v.2: What happened when the people of God ignored the angels' binding words from God? [They received "their just punishment." There were severe penalties for infractions of its demands.]

Q v.3: So who does the author introduce to compare to the angels? [The Lord!]

Q v.3: What is the writer's main concern at this point? [If the people received "their just punishment" after ignoring the angels, what makes them think they'll escape any judgment from God after they rec'd the Word from the Son of God!]

Note: The author is NOT saying that these Jewish Christians are going to hell when he raises the question of "How shall we escape if we ignore a "great salvation." What the writer IS saying is if the readers lost sight of the ultimate victory and deliverance that was promised to them in connection with the Son's own final victory, *they could expect retribution* just like their forefathers.]

Observation v.3: I asked you at the beginning of this lesson why you think you have a "great salvation." The author uses this very phrase "great salvation." As we read the rest of this chapter, see if we can tag additional ways that we have a "great salvation" to deepen our appreciation for it.

Q v.3-4: What evidences does the writer offer regarding the salvation from Jesus? [Salvation was first announced by the Lord; His salvation was confirmed by those who heard Him; God testified to the Lord's salvation by "signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will.]

Observation: We were purchased at a great price. It brings with it great promises and blessings, and it leads to a great inheritance in glory. How can we neglect it?!

Transition: The author will begin to describe the destiny of Jesus in the world to come. Let's look for the ways Jesus's incarnation or humanity accentuates His superiority and helps us deepen our appreciation for our own salvation.

[Read Heb 2:5-9]

V.5:

- It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking.

V.6:

- But there is a place where someone has testified: “What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? [Quoting Ps 8:4-6]

V.7:

- You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor

V.8:

- and put everything under his feet.” In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him.

V.9:

- But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q v.5: If it's not angels that God has subjected the world to come, then who? [Christ – “about whom we are speaking.”]

X-REF Psalm 8 Since we're wrapping our mind around how great our salvation is from the Lord, let's read Ps 8 in its entirety to deepen our appreciation of our salvation. Look at what Christ has achieved! [Have someone read it.]

Q Ps 8: After reading this, how could any of us “drift away” from such a great salvation?! Let's go back to Heb 2:6-8.

Q v.6: Let's make sure we understand “What is man that you are mindful of him.” When God created Adam and Eve, what did God entrust to them? [Dominion over His creation (Gen 1:26-31) King David in Psalm 8 was marveling that God would share His power and glory with sinful man! Man was created “a little lower than the angels” (and therefore inferior to them), but man was given privileges far higher than the angels. God never promised the angels that they would reign in “the world to come.”]

Q v.7: Who is “him” that the writer is referring to? [If you think Man, you wouldn't be considered “wrong” given that the writer is referencing Ps 8, which is often read as a general statement about the role of Man in God's creation. If you think Christ, you wouldn't be “wrong” either because the author of Hebrews appears to be reading Ps 8 primarily as a Messianic text.]

Q v.7-8: Assuming the author is reading Ps 8 as a Messianic text, then what did God accomplish when He made the Son of Man a “little lower than angels?” [By allowing Christ's incarnation to bring Him to this lower place (man was below angels), God crowned Jesus with glory and honor and put everything under His feet.]

Q v.9: Why was it important for Jesus to become man and suffer death? [So that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.]

Q v.9: What does the writer mean that Christ “tasted death for everyone?” [It perhaps reads a bit understated, but let's not miss it! He is saying Jesus Christ became man that He might suffer and

die for man's sin and *restore the dominion that was lost because of sin*. Jesus regained man's lost dominion. Today, everything is under His feet.]

Q: What have you learned about Jesus's humanity that has deepened your appreciation of your salvation? [Let people share their thoughts]

[Read Heb 2:10-18]

V.10:

- In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.

V.11:

- Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.

V.12:

- He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises."

V.13:

- And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me."

V.14:

- Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—

V.15:

- and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

V.16:

- For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.

V.17:

- For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

V.18:

- Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q v.10: Who is the author of our salvation? [Jesus]

Q v.10: What is meant when it says "God made the author of our salvation 'perfect' through suffering? [It means Jesus is "complete, effective, or adequate."]

Observation: If Jesus had not come to earth and become man, He could not take us from earth to share in His glory. His humanity enabled Him to bring all of His children to glory!

Q v.11-13: What is our relationship to Jesus once we become a part of His family? [We are His brothers! What a beautiful picture we're given. Christ is united to us, and we are united to Him:

we are in the same family and spiritually one. The writer references Ps 22:22 and Ps 68:26 in v.12-13 to connect with his readership.]

Q v.14: The author gives us another reason as to why Jesus's humanity made Him superior? [He became flesh and dwelt among us so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death.]

Q v.14: Who holds the "power of death?" [The devil]

Q v.15: Before we became Christians, what does the writer suggest was the fear we were most enslaved to? [Fear of death]

Aside: When I think about my salvation, the fact that Jesus *conquered death* is the reason I (and you) have hope of eternal life. His resurrection means He can raise us up too. But if He had not been willing to come down from heaven and manifest Himself as "man," we wouldn't be meeting her today. There would be no reason to meet. Furthermore, I have no fear of death. It is the most freeing thing. Do any of you feel the same way?! When you know your spirit never dies and you have been assured of eternal life with Christ, you're free to live life to the fullest with meaning and purpose with an eye toward one day meeting our Creator and our Redeemer.

Q v.15: When the writer says that by Christ's death, He might "destroy" him (referring to Satan), what does he really mean by "destroy?" [It doesn't mean annihilate or that Satan would cease to exist, but rather "rendered inoperative" or to be "disarmed." Christ has annulled Satan's power over those whom Christ has redeemed.]

Q v.16: Who is Christ helping? [Abraham's descendants]

Observation: We need to step back a little bit and remember why angels are brought up again and why all of a sudden we're reading about Abraham's descendants.

- Who are the readers of this letter? [Jewish Christians]
- These Jewish people are Abraham's descendants
- Remember that Christ is the "seed of Abraham" as well
- So if Christ has a choice to come to earth to help His own descendants or angels, He's going to help Abraham's descendants.

Transition: The author leads off in v.17 "For this reason..." This follows v.14-16.

Q v.17-18: Why was it important for Jesus to become human? The author gives us three reasons. [First, to experience our humanness so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest. Second, so that he could make atonement for the sins of the people. Third, because he suffered when being tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.]

Q: As you think about this chapter, what have you learned about Jesus's humanity that has deepened your appreciation of your salvation? [Let people share their thoughts]

LOOK:

It is my prayer that you see why Jesus is not inferior because of His incarnation or humanity. In no way did His humanity diminish His superiority over all created things, but rather accentuated it! In fact we saw multiple reasons why our Lord's humanity was neither a handicap, nor a mark of inferiority:

- His humanity enabled Him to regain man's lost dominion.
- His humanity enabled Him to bring many sons to glory.
- His humanity enabled Him to disarm Satan and deliver us from death.
- His humanity enables Him to be a sympathetic High Priest to His people.

Let's close with a reading from Eph 1:17-23 as one more reflection before we end our lesson.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 282–285). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Admonition: Heed the Word and Don't Drift (Heb. 2:1–4)

This is the first of the five admonitions found in Hebrews. Their purpose is to encourage all readers to pay attention to God's Word and obey it. We have already noted that these admonitions become stronger as we progress through the book, from *drifting* from God's Word to *defying* God's Word (Heb. 12:14–29). We also noted that God does not sit idly by and permit His children to rebel against Him. He will continue to speak and, when necessary, He chastens His own.

The admonition is written to believers, for the writer includes himself when he writes "we." The danger here is that of *neglecting our salvation*. Please note that the author did not write "rejecting" but "neglecting." He is not encouraging sinners to become Christians; rather, he is encouraging Christians to pay attention to the great salvation they have received from the Lord.

"Lest ... we should let them slip" (Heb. 2:1) might better be translated "lest we drift away from them." Later (Heb. 6:19), the writer uses the illustration of an anchor to show how confident we can be in the promises of God. More spiritual problems are caused by neglect than perhaps by any other failure on our part. We neglect God's Word, prayer, worship with God's people (see Heb. 10:25), and other opportunities for spiritual growth, and as a result, we start to drift. The anchor does not move; we do.

During the Old Testament days, people who did not heed the Word were sometimes punished. That Word was given through angels, so how much greater responsibility do we have today who have received the Word from the Son of God! In Hebrews 2:2, "transgression" refers to sins of commission, while "disobedience" suggests sins of omission.

I have often told the story of the pastor who preached a series of sermons on "the sins of the saints." He was reprimanded by a member of the church. "After all," said the member, "sin in the life of a Christian is different from sin in the lives of other people."

"Yes," replied the pastor, "it's worse!"

We have the idea that believers today "under grace" can escape the chastening hand of God that was so evident "under Law." But to whom much is given, much shall be required. Not only have we received the Word from the Son of God, but that Word has been confirmed by apostolic miracles (Heb. 2:4). The phrase "signs and wonders" is found eleven times in the New Testament. Here it refers to the miracles that witnessed to the Word and gave confirmation that it was true. These miracles were performed by the Apostles (see Mark 16:17–20; Acts 2:43). Today we have the completed Word of God; so there is no need for these apostolic miracles. God now bears witness through His Spirit using the Word (Rom. 8:16; 1 John 5:1–13). The Spirit also gives spiritual gifts to God's people so that they may minister in the church (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4:11ff).

Too many Christians today take the Word of God for granted and neglect it. In my pastoral ministry, I have discovered that neglect of the Word of God and prayer, publicly and privately, is the cause of most "spiritual drifting." I need not multiply examples because every believer knows that this is true. He has either experienced this "drifting" or has seen it in the lives of others.

The next time you sing "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," recall that the composer, Robert Robinson, was converted under the mighty preaching of George Whitefield, but that later

he drifted from the Lord, He had been greatly used as a pastor, but neglect of spiritual things led him astray. In an attempt to find peace, he began to travel. During one of his journeys, he met a young woman who was evidently very spiritually minded.

“What do you think of this hymn I have been reading?” she asked Robinson, handing him the book. *It was his own hymn!* He tried to avoid her question but it was hopeless, for the Lord was speaking to him. Finally, he broke down and confessed who he was and how he had been living away from the Lord.

“But these ‘streams of mercy’ are still flowing,” the woman assured him; and through her encouragement, Robinson was restored to fellowship with the Lord.

It is easy to drift with the current, but it is difficult to return against the stream. Our salvation is a “great salvation,” purchased at a great price. It brings with it great promises and blessings, and it leads to a great inheritance in glory. How can we neglect it?

Explanation: Why Jesus Christ Is Not Inferior Because of His Humanity (Heb. 2:5–18)

The fact that angels are “ministering spirits” without human bodies would seem to give them an advantage over Jesus Christ who had a human body while He ministered on earth. (Today He has a glorified body that knows no limitations.) The writer gave four reasons that explain why our Lord’s humanity was neither a handicap nor a mark of inferiority.

His humanity enabled Him to regain man’s lost dominion (vv. 5–9). The quotation here is from Psalm 8:4–6, and you will want to read that entire psalm carefully. When God created the first man and woman, He gave them dominion over His Creation (Gen. 1:26–31). David marveled that God would share His power and glory with feeble man! Man was created “a little lower than the angels” (and therefore inferior to them), but man was given privileges far higher than the angels. God never promised the angels that they would reign in “the world to come” (Heb. 2:5).

But we have a serious problem here, for it is obvious that man today is *not* exercising dominion over creation. Certainly man cannot control the fish, fowl, or animals. In fact, man has a hard time controlling himself! “But now we see not yet all things put under him” (Heb. 2:8).

“But we see Jesus!” (Heb. 2:9) He is God’s answer to man’s dilemma. Jesus Christ became man that He might suffer and die for man’s sin and restore the dominion that was lost because of sin. When our Lord was here on earth, He exercised that lost dominion. He had dominion over the fish (see Matt. 17:24–27; Luke 5:1–11; John 21:1–11), over the fowl (Luke 22:34, 60), and over the wild beasts (Mark 1:12–13), and the domesticated beasts (Mark 11:1–7). As the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), Jesus Christ regained man’s lost dominion. Today, everything is under His feet (Eph. 1:20–23).

Man was “crowned ... with glory and honor” (Heb. 2:7, NASB), but he lost his crown and became the slave of sin. Jesus Christ has regained that “glory and honor” (Heb. 2:9), and believers today share His kingly dominion (Rev. 1:5–6). One day, when He establishes His kingdom, we shall reign with Him in glory and honor. Jesus Christ did all of this for us—for lost sinners—because of “the grace of God” (Heb. 2:9). If He had not become man, He could not have died and “taste[d] death [experienced death] for every man” (Heb. 2:9). It is true that angels cannot die; but it is also true that angels cannot save lost sinners and restore man’s lost dominion.

His humanity enabled Him to bring many sons to glory (vv. 10–13). Christ is not only the Last Adam, but He is also the Captain of salvation. That word *Captain* literally means “pioneer—one who opens the way for others to follow.” Christ gave up His glory to become man. He regained His glory when He arose and ascended to heaven. Now He shares that glory

with all who trust Him for salvation (John 17:22–24). He is bringing many sons and daughters to glory!

Christ is united to us, and we are united to Him: we are spiritually one. In fact, we are His “brethren” (Heb. 2:12). The writer quotes Psalm 22:22—a messianic psalm—in which Christ refers to His church as His brethren. This means we and the Son of God share the same nature and belong to the same family! What a marvel of God’s grace!

The writer of Hebrews also quoted Isaiah 8:17–18 from the LXX. The immediate reference, of course, is to the Prophet Isaiah and his unique sons who were given significant names (see Isa. 7:3; 8:1–4). But the ultimate reference is to Jesus Christ. Not only are believers His brethren, but we are also His children: “Behold I and the children which God hath given Me” (Heb. 2:13). If Jesus Christ had not come to earth and become man, He could not take us from earth to share in His glory. The Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection must go together. They all lead to glory.

One phrase in Hebrews 2:10 ought to be discussed before we move on: “Make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” This statement does not suggest that Jesus Christ was imperfect when He was here on earth. The word translated “perfect” means “complete, effective, adequate.” Jesus could not have become an adequate Saviour and High Priest had He not become Man and suffered and died.

His humanity enabled Him to disarm Satan and deliver us from death (vv. 14–16). Angels cannot die. Jesus did not come to save angels (note Heb. 2:16); He came to save humans. This meant that He had to take on Himself flesh and blood and become a Man. Only then could He die and through His death defeat Satan. The word “destroy” does not mean “annihilate,” for it is obvious that Satan is still alive and busy. The word means “render inoperative, make of none effect.” Satan is not destroyed, but he is disarmed.

In what sense did Satan have the power of death? The final authority of death is in the hands of our God (Deut. 32:39; Matt. 10:28; Rev. 1:18). Satan can do only that which is permitted by God (Job 1:12; 2:6). But because Satan is the author of sin (John 8:44), and sin brings death (Rom. 6:23), in this sense Satan exercises power in the realm of death. Jesus called him a murderer (John 8:44). Satan uses the fear of death as a terrible weapon to gain control over the lives of people. His kingdom is one of darkness and death (Col. 1:13). We who trust in Jesus Christ have once and for all been delivered from Satan’s authority and from the terrible fear of death. The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ have given us victory! (1 Cor. 15:55–58)

Jesus Christ did not take on Himself the nature of angels in order to save the fallen angels (2 Peter 2:4; Rev. 12:7–9). Instead, He stooped lower than the angels to become Man! And not just “man” in general; but He became a Jew, a part of the “seed of Abraham” (Heb. 2:16). The Jews were a despised and hated race, and yet our Lord became a Jew.

His humanity enables Him to be a sympathetic High Priest to His people (vv. 17–18). Being pure spirits who have never suffered, the angels cannot identify with us in our weaknesses and needs. But Jesus can! While He was here on earth, Jesus was “made like unto His brethren” in that He experienced the sinless infirmities of human nature. He knew what it was to be a helpless baby, a growing child, a maturing adolescent. He knew the experiences of weariness, hunger, and thirst (John 4:6–8). He knew what it was to be despised and rejected, to be lied about and falsely accused. He experienced physical suffering and death. All of this was a part of His “training” for His heavenly ministry as High Priest.

If you want an example of a man who was *not* a merciful and faithful high priest, then read the account about Eli (1 Sam. 2:27–36). Here was a high priest who did not even lead his own

sons into a faithful walk with God. Eli even accused brokenhearted Hannah of being drunk! (1 Sam. 1:9–18)

Jesus Christ is both merciful and faithful: He is merciful toward people and faithful toward God. He can never fail in His priestly ministries. He made the necessary sacrifice for our sins so that we might be reconciled to God. He did not need to make a sacrifice for Himself, because He is sinless.

But what happens when we who have been saved are tempted to sin? He stands ready to help us! He was tempted when He was on earth, but no temptation ever conquered Him. Because He has defeated every enemy, He is able to give us the grace that we need to overcome temptation. The word “succour” (Heb. 2:18) literally means “to run to the cry of a child.” It means “to bring help when it is needed.” Angels are able to *serve* us (Heb. 1:14), but they are not able to *succour* us in our times of temptation. Only Jesus Christ can do that, and He can do it because He became a man and suffered and died.

It might be good at this point to explain the difference between our Lord’s ministry as High Priest and His ministry as Advocate (1 John 2:1). As our High Priest, our Lord is able to give us grace to keep us from sinning when we are tempted. If we do sin, then He as our Advocate represents us before the throne of God and forgives us when we sincerely confess our sins to Him (1 John 1:5–2:2). Both of these ministries are involved in His present work of intercession; and it is this intercessory ministry that is the guarantee of our eternal salvation (note that in Heb. 7:25 it is “to the uttermost”—i.e., eternally—and not “from the uttermost”).

As you review this section, you cannot help but be amazed at the grace and wisdom of God. From a human point of view, it would seem foolish for God to become Man; yet it was this very act of grace that made possible our salvation and all that goes with it. When Jesus Christ became Man, He did not become inferior to the angels, for in His human body He accomplished something that angels could never accomplish. At the same time, He made it possible for us to share in His glory!

He is not ashamed to call us His brothers and sisters.

Are we ashamed to call Him “Lord”?

Pentecost, J. D. (1985). Daniel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 783-785). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

B. The first warning (2:1–4)

The writer now paused in his exposition to address the readers with the first in a series of five urgent warnings. (The others are in chaps. 3–4; 5:11–6:20; 10:19–39; 12.) This one is the briefest and most restrained of all of them, but is nonetheless solemn.

2:1. The truth he had just enunciated has important implications. The **therefore** shows that this admonition arose directly from the preceding material. Since the Son is so supremely great and is destined for final triumph over His enemies, the readers would do well to **pay more careful attention** to these realities. The danger is that, if they would not, they might **drift away** (*pararyōmen*, a word that occurs only here in the NT). The writer’s audience was marked by immaturity and spiritual sluggishness (cf. 5:11–12), and if this trait were not eliminated there was danger of their slipping away from what they had heard. The author may have had the Septuagint rendering of Proverbs 3:21 in mind, where the Greek translators used the word for “drift away” that is found here: “My son, do not slip away, but keep my counsel and intent.”

2:2–4. Inasmuch as under the Old Covenant, which was instituted through angelic ministrations (Gal. 3:19), there were severe penalties for infractions of its demands, the readers could not suppose there would be no penalties for infractions against the New Covenant. On the contrary, with tantalizing vagueness, the author asked, **How shall we escape** (cf. Heb. 12:25) **if we ignore such a great salvation?** If the readers lost sight of the ultimate victory and deliverance that was promised to them in connection with the Son's own final victory, they could expect retribution. What its nature might be the writer did not spell out, but it would be unwarranted to think he was talking about hell. The "we" which pervades the passage shows that the author included himself among those who needed to pay close attention to these truths.

The "salvation," of course, is the same as that just mentioned in 1:14 (see comments there) and alludes to the readers' potential share in the Son's triumphant dominion, in which He has "companions" (cf. 1:9). The Lord Jesus Himself, while on earth, spoke much of His future kingdom and the participation of His faithful followers in that reign (cf., e.g., Luke 12:31–32; 22:29–30). But **this salvation** experience, **which was first announced by the Lord** had also received confirmation through the various miracles and manifestations of the Spirit which His original auditors, **those who heard Him**, were empowered to exhibit. In speaking like this, the writer of Hebrews regarded these **miracles** as the powers of the coming Age (cf. Heb. 6:5) and, in harmony with the early Christians in the Book of Acts, saw them as expressions of the sovereignty of the One who had gone to sit at God's right hand (cf. "signs," "wonders," and/or "miracles" in Acts 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:6, 13; 14:3; 15:12; also cf. 2 Cor. 12:12). That the author was indeed thinking throughout of "the world to come" is made clear in Hebrews 2:5.

C. The King-Son as the perfected Captain (2:5–18)

The author here returned to his main train of thought, the destiny of Jesus in the world to come. But now Jesus' intimate involvement through His Incarnation with those who will share that destiny was brought to the fore.

1. THE DESTINY OF THE CAPTAIN (2:5–9)

2:5. It has been claimed that the Dead Sea Scrolls show that the sectarians of Qumran believed that the coming Age would be marked by the dominion of Michael and his angelic subordinates. The statement here by the writer of Hebrews forcefully refutes this view. **Not ... angels**, but people, will be awarded this dominion in **the world to come**. That the author was not just now introducing this subject is made plain by the expression **about which we are speaking**. It is obvious that the first chapter, with its manifest stress on the kingship and future reign of the Son, was about this very subject.

2:6–8a. A portion of Psalm 8 was now quoted. While the psalm as a whole is often read as a general statement about the role of man in God's Creation, it is clear in the light of Hebrews 2:5 and the application that follows in verses 8b–9 that the author of Hebrews read it primarily as messianic and eschatological. In doing so he stood well within the New Testament perspective on the Old Testament, a perspective directly traceable to Jesus Himself (cf. Luke 24:25–27, 44–45).

2:8b–9. Whatever might have been the general appropriateness of Psalm 8 to man's current standing in the world, in the view of the writer those words do not now describe the actual state of affairs. Instead, he affirmed, **at present we do not see everything subject to Him**. He was thinking here primarily of Jesus (Heb. 2:9). No doubt the familiar messianic designation "Son of

Man” (v. 6) contributed to this understanding. Thus, he asserted, while total dominion over the created order is not yet His, Jesus is at last seen as **crowned with glory and honor because He suffered death**. The One so crowned **was made a little lower than the angels** for the very purpose of dying, that is, **that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone**. This last statement is best understood as the purpose of the Lord’s being made lower than the angels in His Incarnation. The words beginning with “now crowned” and ending with “suffered death” are a parenthesis more easily read as such in the Greek text. The focus of the statement, despite its reference to Jesus’ present glory, is on the fact that He became a man in order to die.

2. THE CAPTAIN’S LINK WITH HIS FOLLOWERS (2:10–18)

In this section the writer of Hebrews used, for the first time, the Greek word *archēgos* of Jesus (his other use of the word is in 12:2). The word suggests such concepts as “Leader,” “Originator,” and “Founder” and is almost equivalent in some respects to the English word “Pioneer.” The familiar rendering “Captain” (KJV) seems a bit superior to “Author” (2:10). The Lord Jesus, the writer will try to show, is the Captain of that loyal band of people whom God is preparing for glory.

2:10. The author here continued to think of Psalm 8, as his reference to **everything** reveals (cf. Heb. 2:8). Thus the **glory** he mentioned here is also the glory referred to in the psalm, that is, the glory of dominion over the created order (cf. Heb. 2:7–8). Even the expression **many sons** is inspired by the psalmist’s mention of “the Son of Man” and suggests that for the writer of Hebrews the messianic title Son of Man probably had a corporate aspect. Jesus is *the* Son of Man, and His brothers and sisters are the many people who are linked with Him in both **suffering** and future glory. They will be the King’s “companions” who share His joy in the world to come (cf. 1:9).

In 2:9 the writer had mentioned Jesus’ death for the first time. Now he affirmed that such suffering was appropriate for the One who was to serve as the Captain of the many sons. Before He could fittingly lead them to the salvation experience God had in mind for them (i.e., “to glory”), He must be made **perfect** for this role “through suffering.” Since His brethren must suffer, so must He if He is to be the kind of Captain they need. By having done so, He can give them the help they require (cf. v. 18).

2:11–13. Accordingly there is a deep unity between the Son and the many sons. By His death He **makes** them **holy**, and those who are thus **made holy are of the same family**. That the writer thought of the sacrifice of Christ as making the many sons holy in a definitive and final way is clear from 10:10, 14 (see comments there). Thus as Psalm 22:22 (quoted in Heb. 2:12) predicts, Jesus can **call them brothers**. He can also speak to them of His own **trust in God** (v. 13a, quoting Isa. 8:17) and can regard them as **the children God has given Me** (Heb. 2:13b, quoting Isa. 8:18). Like an elder brother in the midst of a circle of younger children, the Captain of their salvation can teach them the lessons of faith along the pathway of suffering.

2:14–15. These children, however, were once held in servitude by their enemy, Satan. Since they were human, their Captain had to become human and die for them, in order to rescue them. But by doing so He was able to **destroy ... the devil**. The author did not mean that Satan ceased to exist or to be active. Rather the word he used for “destroy” (*katargēsē*) indicates the annulment of his power over those whom Christ redeems. In speaking of the devil as wielding **the power of death**, the writer meant that Satan uses people’s **fear of death** to enslave them to his will. Often people make wrong moral choices out of their intense desire for self-preservation.

The readers were reminded that they were no longer subject to such **slavery** and that they could face death with the same confidence in God their Captain had.

2:16–18. Whatever their needs or trials, their Captain is adequate to help them since He ministers to **Abraham’s descendants**, not angels. The expression “Abraham’s descendants” (lit., “Abraham’s seed”) may point to the Jewishness of the writer’s audience, but even Gentile Christians could claim to be the “seed of Abraham” in a spiritual sense (Gal. 3:29). The help which the Captain gives to these His followers is again predicated on the fact that **He was made like His brothers in every way** (Heb. 2:17), that is, both in terms of becoming incarnate and by virtue of suffering. Here for the first time the writer introduced the thought of His priesthood, which he elaborated on later. For now he was content to affirm that this identification with “His brothers” had made possible a priesthood characterized both by mercy and fidelity **in service to God**. This involved, as its basis, **atonement for the sins of the people**. Of this too the author said more later, but he chose to conclude the section on the profoundly hopeful thought that the Captain, in His role as Priest, is able to aid his readers **who are being tempted** (v. 18) out of the experience of temptation which His own sufferings entailed. Though the discussion of these themes is far from over, the author has already suggested that the Captain has indeed been made perfect for His role in leading them into participation in His future glory.

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith (pg. 1825). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

2:16 Some people argue this verse teaches that Jesus is a biological descendant of Abraham and then question its veracity in the light of Mt 1:18, which teaches that Christ lacked a biological human father. However, “offspring” in Heb 2:16 refers to the “descendants” of Abraham and not to Jesus. The point in this verse is that the Son, through the incarnation, helps “Abraham’s offspring” and not the angels.