

THE LETTER (EPISTLE) TO THE HEBREWS

A few notes on Chapter 1:1-4: The superiority of Christ

"God having provided something better for us.." Hebrews 11:40

Christ, the Son of God and His Glory (1:1 – 2:4)

OVERALL THEME

Christ, the Son of God and His Glory (1:1 - 2:4)

1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,

2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

INTRODUCTION

The verses set the tone for the entire book - the subject being Christ's superiority over all things. The setting can be compared with Matthew 17:

*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.
Matthew 17:5 (KJV)*

- Peter, James and John are taken with Jesus onto the Mount, where Jesus is transfigured before them.
 - We see Moses - representing the Law and Elijah representing the Prophets.
 - We note the transfiguration - something that Moses or Elijah could not even approach the glory of.
 - We see Jesus being shown as being superior to both Moses and Elijah, and implying also His superiority to the Law and the Prophets.
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- We then see Jesus standing alone - He alone is sufficient.

This event demonstrates the inferiority of the Judaism system, for that which was most esteemed in Judaism was to be cast aside with Jesus standing alone.

CHAPTER 1:1 GOD, WHO AT VARIOUS TIMES AND IN VARIOUS WAYS SPOKE IN TIME PAST TO THE FATHERS BY THE PROPHETS

- Now this was not unknown - compare the response to the Magi (wise men) when they asked where Jesus was to be born.
- The writer points out that in many places in the Old Testament and by many different prophets, the coming of one who was superior was foretold (in more than 300 places). The way he was to come was truly divined but not believed.

CHAPTER 1:2 HAS IN THESE LAST DAYS SPOKEN TO US BY HIS SON

- But the Son has come, and has spoken. It is the Son, not merely the Messiah, or the Christ, but the heir of all things.
- Note the importance of the spoken word. John 12:48-49 (NKJV)

He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him-the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.

- Note also the authority of the spoken word - the Son was obedient, speaking the words of the Father, which gives the authority, the credence, the power to the word.

(49) For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.

CHAPTER 1:2 WHOM HE HAS APPOINTED HEIR OF ALL THINGS

- The inheritance was appointed by God. The appointment could only be if the Son was viewed as incarnate - it is not some abstract form of the Godhead.
- The appointment is in the eternal counsels of the Godhead, as the mediator. See Acts 2:23, and Psa 89:27 (It was foretold this appointment would occur).
- God can do this because:

My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,' Isaiah 46:10 (NKJV)

- This gives the Son the right to the supreme dignity of the office - Christ did not glorify himself, but the Father glorified him.

Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. (Ps 2:7)

- The Heir becomes the lord of all (Gal 4:1). There is a distinction between servant and heir, with the heir being the successor of the father. The Son is also the heir of the Father's things - that is all things.

It alludes to the legal title.

The extent of the inheritance is found in the word "all"

This is yet to be revealed, for a short time, until the times of the gentiles are fulfilled, Satan rules this earth.

The inheritance extends from earth to heaven.

Psalm 2:8 (NKJV) Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.

And

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Matthew 28:18 (KJV)

Noting if we are the children, then we are heirs (Romans 8:16-17)

Angels are not heirs, we are, not as Christ that is joint-heirs, not joint-lords.

CHAPTER 1:2 THROUGH WHOM ALSO HE MADE THE WORLDS

He was the creator of all things. Here "worlds" is "ages" (aionas) but probably signifies the universe here (so rendered in the NIV). See also John 1:3, Col 1:16

CHAPTER 1:3 WHO BEING THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS GLORY

He represents God. We term this His effulgency (effuse - to pour out, bubble up etc).

It is the Divine dignity of His person.

He alone is the only creature (if you can call Christ that) that can reflect the true nature of the Father.

The Son is not inferior to the Father, but every way his equal.

Only through the Son can we perceive the extent of the glory of God.

CHAPTER 1:3 AND THE EXPRESS IMAGE OF HIS PERSON

- Describes his being.
- The Greek expresses the idea of that which is engraved (being a single word)
- All in all, Christ is the express image of the Father

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.
Colossians 1:15*

- This idea is difficult to imagine, which Paul attempted to described to Timothy:

*Who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no
man has seen or can see, to whom [be] honour and everlasting power.
Amen. 1 Timothy 6:16*

- It is the one in whom all perfection exists, and indeed the one in which all perfection has been proved (as in tried).
- The point here is that God manifested himself as a man, who hungered, became tied, and wept etc – this is taken up further on in the Epistle.

CHAPTER 1:3 AND UPHOLDING ALL THINGS BY THE WORD OF HIS POWER

- The idea expressed here is that of His administration which is obviously connected to the making of the worlds (2).
- It expresses the notion that Christ is not merely the maker, or the minder, but the fact that the very existence of all we know is invested in Christ himself, that is alone.
- This is a Divine work – his own work. eg

*But Christ as a son over his own house
Hebrews 3:6*

- Note the word "uphold" is to preserve, as well as to support or carry.
- The irony is that He who came as a baby servant is the sustainer of the universe.
- It is also interesting to note that the Torah (Leviticus) shows that it is blood that sustains life, and it was the shedding of blood that saved us.

CHAPTER 1:3 WHEN HE HAD BY HIMSELF PURGED OUR SINS

- This is the most wonderful news we have – the creator and sustainer of the universe has also dealt with our sin, brought upon ourselves.
- Note the past tense – it also indicates finished or completion.

1 John 1:7 the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

CHAPTER 1:3 SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE MAJESTY ON HIGH

- He sits. This theme will be taken up again three times in the Epistle, next in chapter 8, always juxtaposed with the inability to the Levitical priests to sit, for their work was never complete (and indeed could never be complete).
- It was his position, as seen by Stephen (Acts 7).
- The remark epitomises Christ – what he does is perfect, complete. The purging of sin was once for all.
- The phase recognises the highest exaltation – he came in the form of a servant, but now has been exalted to the highest place.
- Superiors sit before inferiors (we sit at the marriage supper – but only after Christ had sat)
- The matter has been settled – he sits
- He rests

CHAPTER 1:4 HAVING BECOME SO MUCH BETTER THAN THE ANGELS, AS HE HAS BY INHERITANCE OBTAINED A MORE EXCELLENT NAME THAN THEY

- The theme of angels appears throughout the first two chapters.
- Angels are misunderstood by many Christians, but they are real and have a real place in the Kingdom of God. They are above humans but below their creator – Christ. The Jews clearly understood their position their character and their importance. It also highlights the position of Satan – Lucifer who rebelled against God, also falls into this category, being a mere angel.
- Christ has an inheritance angels inherit nothing.

- The firstborn gains a name – the family name, which Christ is – the first born among the dead.
 - See also John 17, John 1:1, Isaiah 14.

David L Simon (March 2006) (CCC)
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