

HEBREWS 1

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God has Spoken by His Son	God's Supreme Revelation	The Prologue	God's Word Through His Son	The Greatness of the Incarnate Son of God
1:1-4	1:1-4	1:1-4	1:1-3	1:1-4
The Son Superior to the Angels	The Son Exalted Above Angels	The Superiority of Christ to Angels (1:5-2:18)	The Greatness of God's Son 1:4-13	The Son is Greater Than the Angels (1:5-2:18)
1:5-14	1:5-14	1:5-14	1:14	1:5-13 1:14

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vi in Introductory Notes)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The first paragraph is a poetic/hymnic presentation of Jesus' cosmic and redemptive achievements. He is Lord of heaven and earth. This is spelled out in seven descriptive phrases. It is one of the highest Christologies in the NT (cf. John 1:1-18; Phil. 2:6-11; and Col. 1:15-17).
 1. the heir of the Father's creation (v. 2)
 2. the agent of the Father's creation (v. 2)

* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs in chapter one. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two and Three.

3. radiance of the Father's glory (v. 3)
4. Exact image of the Father's nature (v. 3)
5. the sustainer of the Father's creation (v. 3)
6. the means of forgiveness of the Father's creation (v. 3)
7. the royal and priestly Messiah sent by the Father (v. 3)

- B. Verses 1-4 deal primarily with how God has spoken to us in a new way through a son, Jesus of Nazareth. No longer do we receive revelation bit by bit through servants (i.e. the prophets of the OT), but now through a full revelation in a family member ("a son," cf. 1:2; 3:6; 5:8; 7:28).
- C. The second paragraph (vv. 5-14) continues the theme of Jesus' superiority. In vv. 1-4 He is a more superior revelation than the prophets; in vv. 5-14 He is a more superior mediator than the angels; confirmed by a series of seven OT texts from the Septuagint (mostly from the Psalms): Ps. 2:7; II Sam. 7:14; Ps. 97:7; Ps. 104:4; Ps. 45:6-7; Ps. 102:25-27 and Ps. 110:1.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-4

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

1:1 "God, after He spoke" "God" is not first (fronted) in the Greek sentence; therefore, this text is not emphasizing the doctrine of revelation, but the manner of revelation in the past (AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE).

▣ **"in the prophets"** The Jews believed that prophets wrote Scripture. This is why Moses was considered a prophet (cf. Deut. 18:15) and why the Jews labeled the historical books of Joshua through Kings as the "former prophets." Therefore, this phrase does not refer to the OT prophets only, but to all the OT writers.

The phrase "in (*en*) the prophets" (v.1) is parallel to "in (*en*) His son" (v.2). There is an obvious contrast between the two means of revelation. One was a servant and one is a family member. The first was only partial but the second is full and complete (cf. Col. 1:15-17).



NASB	"in many portions and in many ways"
NKJV	"at various times and in different ways"
NRSV	"in many and various ways"
TEV	"many times and in many ways"
NJB	"at many moments in the past and by many means"

The OT revelation was piece-meal in form and content. This phrase is placed first (fronted) in the Greek text of verse 1 to show the author's emphasis.

1:2 "in these last days" The Jews saw two ages: the current evil age of rebellion and sin and the coming age of righteousness inaugurated by the coming of the Messiah in the power of the Spirit. The OT

emphasizes the coming of the Messiah in judgment and power to establish the new age. However, it failed to see clearly the first coming of Jesus as the “Suffering Servant” in Isa. 53 and the humble One riding the colt of a donkey in Zech. 9:9. From NT revelation we know that God planned two comings of the Messiah. The period between the Incarnation (the first coming) and the second coming involves the overlapping of the two Jewish ages. This is designated in the NT by the phrase “last days.” We have been in this period for over 2000 years.

TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

The OT prophets viewed the future by an extension of the present. For them the future will be a restoration of geographical Israel. However, even they saw a new day (cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22). With the continued willful rejection of YHWH by the descendants of Abraham (even after the exile) a new paradigm developed in Jewish intertestamental apocalyptic literature (i.e. I Enoch, IV Ezra, II Baruch). These writings begin to distinguish between two ages: a current evil age dominated by Satan and a coming age of righteousness dominated by the Spirit and inaugurated by the Messiah (often a dynamic warrior).

In this area of theology (eschatology) there is an obvious development. Theologians call this “progressive revelation.” The NT affirms this new cosmic reality of two ages (i.e. a temporal dualism):

<u>Jesus</u>	<u>Paul</u>	<u>Hebrews</u>
Matthew 12:32	Romans 12:2	1:2
Matthew 13:22 & 29	I Cor. 1:20; 2:6,8; 3:18	6:5
Mark 10:30	II Cor. 4:4	11:3
Luke 16:8	Galatians 1:4	
Luke 18:30	Eph. 1:21; 2:1,7; 6:12	
Luke 20:34-35	I Timothy 6:17	
	II Timothy 4:10	
	Titus 2:12	

In NT theology these two Jewish ages have been overlapped because of the unexpected and overlooked predictions of the two comings of the Messiah. The incarnation of Jesus fulfilled the OT prophecies of the inauguration of the new age. However, the OT also saw His coming as Judge and Conqueror, yet He came at first as the Suffering Servant (cf. Isa. 53), humble and meek (cf. Zech. 9:9). He will return in power just as the OT predicted (cf. Rev. 19). This two-stage fulfillment caused the Kingdom to be present (inaugurated), but future (not fully consummated). This is the NT tension of the already, but not yet!

▣ **“His Son”** The ANARTHROUS phrase “a son” should not be capitalized because the reference here is to the manner of revelation, not a title for Jesus (cf. 3:5-6; 5:8; 7:28). Jesus is not a servant like Moses or the prophets, but a family member.

▣ **“whom He appointed”** This is an AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE which implies simple action in past time (INDICATIVE MOOD). When did God appoint Jesus heir? Was it at His baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17) or resurrection (cf. Rom. 1:4)? This question led to the heresy of “adoptionism” which said that Jesus became the Messiah at some point in time. This, however, contradicts John 1:1-18; 8:57-58; Phil. 2:6-7; and Col. 1:17. Jesus has always been deity (cf. John 1:1-2); therefore, heirship must even predate the incarnation in an ontological sense.

▣ **“heir of all things”** As the “Son of God,” the unique son of God, He is the heir (cf. Matt. 21:33-46; Ps. 2:8). The amazing thing is that sinful humanity, through faith in Him, shares His heirship (cf. 1:14; 6:2; Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7).

▣ **“through whom also He made the world”** It is always difficult to know for certain how related terms are to be interpreted. There is only a certain semantic overlap between synonyms. The technical Greek term for creation out of nothing is *ktizō*, yet the word in this text is *poieō*, which meant to form something from a pre-existing substance. Is the author using these terms synonymously or is a specific distinction intended? It is doubtful that a technical distinction is intended because the theological context refers to creation by the spoken word (*ex nihilo*, cf. Gen. 1:6,9,16,20,24,26, but in 2:7 God formed man).

The term “world” is literally “ages” (*aiōnos*). This can refer to the earth (cf. Matt. 28:20) or to the ages (i.e. time). Jesus is surely the creator of both (cf. John 1:3; Col. 1:16; I Cor. 8:6). The author of Hebrews uses both *aiōnos* (cf. 1:2; 6:5; 11:3) and *kosmos* (cf. 4:3; 9:26; 10:5; 11:7,38), apparently as synonymous terms.

1:3

NASB “He is the radiance of His glory”
NKJV “who being the brightness of His glory”
NRSV, NJB “He is the reflection of God’s glory”
TEV “He reflects the brightness of God’s glory”

The word “radiance” (*apaugasma*) is used only here in the NT. In Philo it was used of Christ’s relationship to God in the sense that the *logos* was a reflection of deity. The early Greek church fathers used it in the sense of Christ as the reflection or effulgence of God. In a popular sense to see Jesus is to see God, as a mirror reflects the light of the full sun. The Hebrew term “glory” (*kabod*) was often used in the sense of brightness (cf. Exod.16:10; 24:16-17; Lev. 9:6).

This phrasing may be related to Prov. 8:22-31, where “wisdom” (the term is FEMININE in both Hebrew and Greek) is personified as God’s first creation (cf. *Sirach* 1:4) and agent of creation (cf. *Wisdom of Solomon* 9:9). This same concept is developed in the apocryphal book *Wisdom of Solomon* 7:15-22a and 22b-30. In v. 22 wisdom fashions all things; in v. 25 wisdom is pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; in v. 26 wisdom is the reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God; in v. 29 compared with the light (i.e. sun and stars) she is found to be superior.”

In the OT the most common Hebrew word for “glory” (*kabod*) was originally a commercial term (which referred to a pair of scales) which meant “to be heavy.” That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God’s majesty (*Shekinah* Cloud of Glory). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold. God can only be truly known through Christ (cf. Jer. 1:14; Matt. 17:2; Heb. 1:3; James 2:1).

The term “glory” is somewhat ambiguous: (1) it may be parallel to “the righteousness of God”; (2) it may refer to the “holiness” or “perfection” of God; (3) it could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), but which was later marred through rebellion (cf. Gen. 3:1-22).

▣
NASB “the exact representation of His nature”
NKJV “the express image of His person”
NRSV “the exact imprint of God’s very being”
TEV “the exact likeness of God’s own being”
NJB “bears the imprint of God’s own being”

This phrase is found only here in the NT but is found often in the writings of Philo. It completes or adds to the previous characterization. This Greek term was originally used of an engraving tool, but it came to represent the mark it made. Jesus not only reflects deity, He bears the unique stamp of deity (cf. John 14:9).

There are two Greek terms used to describe Christ's relationship to the Father: (1) *eikon*, which means image (cf. II Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15) and (2) *charaktēr* (cf. Heb. 1:3). The former is the more common in the NT but the latter term is stronger in meaning (cf. KJV "the exact image"). What is God like? He is exactly like Jesus of Nazareth, who is the full and complete revelation of the invisible God!

▣ **“upholds all things”** This is the common term “to bear or carry” (*pherō*), but in this context it has the connotation of “to uphold,” “to maintain,” “to sustain.” This conveys the theological concept of “Providence” (cf. Col. 1:17 and another possible allusion to *Wisdom of Solomon* 8:1). Not only did Jesus create the universe (another possible meaning of *pherō*) by the spoken word (cf. Gen. 1), but He sustains it by the spoken word!

▣ **“by the word of His power”** In Jewish thought God's power was presented by the spoken word. Elohim creates by the spoken word (cf. Gen. 1:3,6,9,14,20,24). YHWH's word had an independent force to accomplish His will (cf. Isa. 55:11). It is not by accident that the Christ is called “the Word” in John 1:1.

▣ **“When he had made purification of sins”** This is an AORIST MIDDLE PARTICIPLE which emphasizes the subject and describes a completed act (cf. 7:27; 9:12,28; 10:10). Jesus has acted on behalf of sinful mankind (cf. Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21).

The term “purification” is used in the NT in several senses: (1) ceremonial cleansing (cf. Luke 2:22; 5:14; John 2:6); (2) physical healing (cf. Mark 1:44); and (3) a metaphor for expiation (cf. Heb. 1:3; II Pet. 1:9, so says William D. Mounce in his *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, p. 257). We get the English word “catharsis” from this Greek term.

Notice the descriptive phrase “of sins.” There are two possible ways to understand this phrase: (1) it is OBJECTIVE GENITIVE “of sins,” not ABLATIVE “from sins.” Jesus' death dealt with the sin problem; (2) it is PLURAL which does not imply mankind's Adamic nature, “the sin problem,” but individual acts of sin. Jesus dealt with the guilt of mankind's rebellion (past and present).

This textual option is accepted by the UBS⁴ scholars, but there is another possibility. In the Alexandrian textual family represented by P⁴⁶ the phrase “through himself” (*dia heautou*) occurs instead of “His” (*autou*), which makes it refer to the previous clause. This same type of manuscript variant is found in I John 5:18b.

It is interesting that this “through himself” is lacking in other early Alexandrian textual family representatives (N and B). It is usually possible that orthodox scribes feared that the phrase “through himself made purification of sins” might lead to gnostic speculation and dropped “*di' heautou*” to “*autou*.” For a more complete discussion of the tendencies of orthodox scribes see Bart D. Ehrman's, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, Oxford Press, 1993.

▣ **“He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”** This is a figurative way of stating Jesus' finished work and exaltation (cf. Ps. 110:1; Luke 22:69). God does not have a right hand. This is a biblical metaphor (anthropomorphic) of power, authority, and preeminence. No OT priest ever sat down! Jesus' earthly work is finished. In a sense this is a kingly, royal metaphor (cf. Ps. 2; 45; and 110:1-3) linked to a priestly function (cf. Ps. 110:4). The Dead Sea community expected two Messiahs, one priestly (i.e. line of Aaron, tribe of Levi), one kingly (i.e. line of Jesse, tribe of Judah). Jesus fulfills all three OT anointed offices: prophet (cf. Deut. 18:18), priest (cf. Ps. 110:4), and king (cf. II Sam. 7:13,16; Ps. 2; 110:1-3).



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “the Majesty on high”

TEV “of God, the Supreme Power”

NJB “the divine Majesty on high”

This is a circumlocution. Jews were afraid to use God’s name lest they take it in vain (cf. Exod.20:7) so they inserted many alternate terms and phrases (i.e. “Kingdom of heaven,” “throne,” etc.) or used the PASSIVE VOICE to refer to Him.

1:4 This verse seems to be a transition between vv. 1-3 and vv. 5-14. Today’s English Version (TEV) begins the discussion of Jesus’ superiority over the angels with v. 3.

The name which Jesus has been given that is greater than the angels (cf. Rom. 8:38-39; Eph. 1:21; Col. 2:15) is “son” (cf. vv. 5 [twice] and 8) or “Lord” (cf. v. 10 and Phil. 2:9-11).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:5-14

⁵For to which of the angels did He ever say, “YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU”? And again, “I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME”? ⁶And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, “AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM.” ⁷And of the angels He says, “WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS, AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE.” ⁸But of the Son He says, “YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM. ⁹YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS.” ¹⁰And, “YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS; ¹¹THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN; AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD LIKE A GARMENT, ¹²AND LIKE A MANTLE YOU WILL ROLL THEM UP; LIKE A GARMENT THEY WILL ALSO BE CHANGED. BUT YOU ARE THE SAME, AND YOUR YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END.” ¹³But to which of the angels has He ever said, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET”? ¹⁴Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

1:5 “YOU ARE MY SON” This is the first in a series of seven OT passages quoted from the Septuagint to prove the superiority of the Messiah over the angels. The first phrase comes from Ps. 2:7, while the second is from II Sam. 7:14. This first phrase is used several times in the Gospels to refer to Christ:

1. at His baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17; Lk. 3:22)
2. at the Transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7)
3. at the Resurrection (cf. Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:4)

The term “son,” used in both quotes of v. 5, is from the OT where it can refer to different people/groups

1. angels (cf. Gen. 6:2,4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Ps. 29:1,8)
2. the nation of Israel (cf. Hos. 11:1)
3. the Israeli king (cf. II Sam. 7:14; Ps. 89:27)
4. the Messiah (cf. Ps. 2:7)
5. David and the Messiah (rabbinical interpretation)

□ “TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU” Jesus has always been deity (cf. John 1:1-18). Therefore, this cannot refer to the essence of His nature, but to His manifestation in time (the incarnation). Some commentators relate it to the resurrection (cf. Rom. 1:3-4). Some rabbis saw Ps. 2:7 as the Messiah brought back to life after divine suffering (cf. Isa. 53). The PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE means “have begotten.” This

may be a rabbinical allusion to Prov. 8:22-31 where “wisdom” (which is FEMININE in Hebrew) was the first creation of God and became God’s agent in further creation (also see *Wisdom of Solomon* 7:1-8:1). This is alluded to, not to bring in a feminine aspect to deity, nor to affirm Jesus as a created being, but to affirm Jesus of Nazareth as God the Father’s agent of creation (cf. v. 10; John 1:3; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16 which was mentioned in v. 2).

▣ **“I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM”** This is a quote from the Septuagint of II Sam. 7:14, which initially referred to Solomon. The author of Hebrews applies it to Jesus. This dual reference is similar to the “virgin birth” prophecy of Isa. 7:14. Both are examples of multi-fulfillment prophecy. The NT authors under inspiration used the OT in rabbinical ways, typological ways, and word plays which are not appropriate for later interpreters.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ILLUMINATION

God has acted in the past to clearly reveal Himself to mankind. In theology this is called revelation. He selected certain men to record and explain this self-revelation. In theology this is called inspiration. He has sent His Spirit to help readers understand His word. In theology this is called illumination. The problem arises when we assert that the Spirit is involved in understanding God’s word—so why are there so many interpretations of it?

Part of the problem lies in the reader’s pre-understanding or personal experiences. Often a personal agenda is addressed by using the Bible in a proof-text or atomistic fashion. Often a theological grid is imposed over the Bible allowing it to speak only in certain areas and in selected ways. Illumination simply cannot be equated with inspiration although the Holy Spirit is involved in each.

The best approach may be to attempt to assert the central idea of a paragraph, not interpret every detail of the text. It is the topical thought which conveys the original author’s central truth. Outlining the book or literary unit helps one follow the intent of the original inspired author. No interpreter is inspired. We cannot reproduce the biblical writer’s method of interpretation. We can and must attempt to understand what they were saying to their day and then communicate that truth to our own day. There are parts of the Bible that are ambiguous or hidden (until a certain time or period). There will always be disagreements on some texts and subjects but we must state clearly the central truths and allow freedom for individual interpretations within the boundary of the original author’s intent. Interpreters must walk in the light they have, always being open to more light from the Bible and the Spirit. God will judge us based on the level of our understanding and how we live out that understanding.

1:6

NASB “and when He again brings”

NKJV “But when He again brings”

NRSV “And again, when he brings”

TEV “But when God was about to send”

NJB “Again, when he brings”

This does not refer to a second coming of the son. It is a literary way of introducing a new quote (cf. v. 5d; 2:13; 4:5; 10:30).

Notice that NASB, NKJV, NRSV, and NJB have “bring” while TEV has “send.” The first would emphasize the ascension of the glorified Christ; the second would refer to the incarnation at Bethlehem. Because the Father-Son analogy begins with Jesus’ incarnation, the TEV fits the context best.

▣ **“firstborn”** This phrase is used (1) in the OT where the firstborn child received a double inheritance to take care of the parents; (2) in Ps. 89:27 to refer to the king of Israel; (3) in Rabbinical Judaism it came to

be a phrase for preeminence (cf. Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15, 18; Rev. 1:5). This phrase was the heart of the Arius/Athanasius controversy. Arius asserted that Jesus was God's highest creation, quoting this passage and Ps. 89:27. Athanasius asserted that Jesus was full deity and quoted verses 2 and 3; (4) in a figurative sense, Christ is "the first-born of a new humanity which is to be glorified, as its exalted Lord is glorified. . .one coming forth from God to found the new community of saints" (from *A Greek-English Lexicon* by Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danken, p. 726); and (5) in the Greco-Roman world the firstborn acted as priest for the family (cf. *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* by Moulton and Milligan, p. 557).

▣ **"into the world"** This implies the pre-existent Jesus, who has always been deity, but a new stage of His redemptive ministry began at Bethlehem when He took on human flesh (cf. Phil. 2:6-8a). This is not the more common term *kosmos*, but *oikoumenē*, which was used of the surface of the earth which was inhabited by humans. This term is also used in 2:5 metaphorically as a reference to the new age.

▣ **"He says, 'AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM'"** This is a quote from the Septuagint of either Deut. 32:43 or Ps. 97:7. The Hebrew word for "angels" used in Ps. 97:7 is *Elohim*. From Cave #4 of the Dead Sea Scrolls we have a corroboration of this Septuagint translation. The term *Elohim* can refer to God, angelic beings, human judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; 22:8-9), or even the human spirit (cf. I Sam. 28:13).

This quote is not meant to teach that angels did not worship Christ until the incarnation. In context it is showing the superiority of the Son by the fact that angels worship Him.

1:7 "WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS" This begins a comparison between angels being changeable (cf. LXX of Ps. 104:4) in contradistinction to Jesus who is permanent and unchanging (cf. vv. 8,11,12; 13:8). The rabbis, quoting Lam. 3:23 or Dan. 7:10, said that God created the angels new every morning.

1:8 "Thy throne, O God, is forever" This is a quote from the Septuagint of Ps. 45:6, which addresses the Messianic King. In the OT context the PRONOUN is very ambiguous and can refer to God the Father or God the Son. However, in this text it seems that this is one of the strongest affirmations of the deity of Christ found anywhere in the Scriptures (cf. John 1:18; 20:28).

There is a significant Greek manuscript problem at this point. Some very early manuscripts (P⁴⁶, א, and B) have the PRONOUN (*autou* i.e. "His throne") which adds to the ambiguity. The United Bible Society's fourth edition supports "your" with a "B" rating (the text is almost certain). This form is found in manuscripts A and D and is the exact quote from the Septuagint of Ps. 45:6. Often ancient scribes tended to make texts more explicit, especially if they relate to Christological debates of their day (cf. Bart D. Ehrman *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, Oxford Press, 1993, p. 265).

This discussion is not meant in any way to deny the full deity of Christ, but to show the tendency of ancient scribes to alter texts for theological as well as grammatical purposes. This is why the modern academic discipline of Textual Criticism judges manuscript variants based on the following: (1) the most unusual reading is probably original; (2) the reading that explains the other variants is probably original; and (3) the reading with a wide geographical distribution (not just one family of manuscripts) is probably original. Bart Ehrman's book also makes the point that scribes made changes to the Greek text for theological purposes, especially during the periods of conflict over Christology and the Trinity (i.e. third and fourth centuries).

▣ **"FOREVER AND EVER"** This obviously does not refer to a millennial reign, but the eternal reign (cf. Isa. 9:8; Dan. 7:14,18; Luke 1:33; II Pet. 1:11; Rev. 11:15).

1:9 "YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS" This is a quote from the Septuagint of Ps. 45:7 which relates to the earthly life of Jesus Christ.

SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS

“Righteousness” is such a crucial topic that a Bible student must make a personal extensive study of the concept.

In the OT God’s character is described as “just” or “righteous.” The Mesopotamian term itself comes from a river reed which was used as a construction tool to judge the horizontal straightness of walls and fences. God chose the term to be used metaphorically of His own nature. He is the straight edge (ruler) by which all things are evaluated. This concept asserts God’s righteousness as well as His right to judge.

Man was created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3; 9:6). Mankind was created for fellowship with God. All of creation is a stage or backdrop for God and mankind’s interaction. God wanted His highest creation, mankind, to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and be like Him! Mankind’s loyalty was tested (cf. Gen. 3) and the original couple failed the test. This resulted in a disruption of the relationship between God and humanity (cf. Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12-21).

God promised to repair and restore the fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:15). He does this through His own will and His own Son. Humans were incapable of restoring the breach (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20).

After the Fall (Gen. 3), God’s first step toward restoration was the concept of covenant based on His invitation and mankind’s repentant, faithful, obedient response. Because of the Fall, humans were incapable of appropriate action (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Gal. 3). God Himself had to take the initiative to restore covenant-breaking humans. He did this by

1. declaring sinful mankind righteous through the work of Christ (forensic righteousness)
2. freely giving mankind righteousness through the work of Christ (imputed righteousness)
3. providing the indwelling Spirit who produces righteousness (ethical righteousness) in mankind
4. restoring the fellowship of the garden of Eden by Christ restoring the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) in believers (relational righteousness)

However, God requires a covenantal response. God decrees (i.e. freely gives) and provides, but humans must respond and continue to respond in:

1. repentance
2. faith
3. lifestyle obedience
4. perseverance

Righteousness, therefore, is a covenantal, reciprocal action between God and His highest creation. It is based on the character of God, the work of Christ, and the enabling of the Spirit, to which each individual must personally and continually respond appropriately. The concept is called “justification by faith.” The concept is revealed in the Gospels, but not in these terms. It is primarily defined by Paul, who uses the Greek term “righteousness” in its various forms over 100 times.

Paul, being a trained rabbi, uses the term *dikaionē* in its Hebrew sense of the term *SDQ* used in the Septuagint, not from Greek literature. In Greek writings the term is connected to someone who conformed to the expectations of deity and society. In the Hebrew sense it is always structured in covenantal terms. YHWH is a just, ethical, moral God. He wants His people to reflect His character. Redeemed mankind becomes a new creature. This newness results in a new lifestyle of godliness (Roman Catholic focus of justification). Since Israel was a theocracy, there was no clear delineation between the secular (society’s norms) and the sacred (God’s will). This distinction is expressed in the Hebrew and Greek terms being translated into English as “justice” (relating to society) and “righteousness” (relating to religion).

The gospel (good news) of Jesus is that fallen mankind has been restored to fellowship with God. Paul’s paradox is that God, through Christ, acquits the guilty. This has been accomplished through the Father’s

love, mercy, and grace; the Son's life, death, and resurrection; and the Spirit's wooing and drawing to the gospel. Justification is a free act of God, but it must issue in godliness (Augustine's position, which reflects both the Reformation emphasis on the freeness of the gospel and Roman Catholic emphasis on a changed life of love and faithfulness). For Reformers the term "the righteousness of God" is an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE (i.e. the act of making sinful mankind acceptable to God [positional sanctification]), while for the Catholic it is a SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE, which is the process of becoming more like God (experiential progressive sanctification). In reality it is surely both!!

In my view all of the Bible, from Gen. 4 - Rev. 20, is a record of God's restoring the fellowship of Eden. The Bible starts with God and mankind in fellowship in an earthly setting (cf. Gen. 1-2) and the Bible ends with the same setting (cf. Rev. 21-22). God's image and purpose will be restored!

To document the above discussions note the following selected NT passages illustrating the Greek word group.

1. God is righteous (often connected to God as Judge)
 - a. Romans 3:26
 - b. II Thessalonians 1:5-6
 - c. II Timothy 4:8
 - d. Revelation 16:5
2. Jesus is righteous
 - a. Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14 (title of Messiah)
 - b. Matthew 27:19
 - c. I John 2:1,29; 3:7
3. God's will for His creation is righteousness
 - a. Leviticus 19:2
 - b. Matthew 5:48 (cf. 5:17-20)
4. God's means of providing and producing righteousness
 - a. Romans 3:21-31
 - b. Romans 4
 - c. Romans 5:6-11
 - d. Galatians 3:6-14
 - e. Given by God
 - 1) Romans 3:24; 6:23
 - 2) I Corinthians 1:30
 - 3) Ephesians 2:8-9
 - f. Received by faith
 - 1) Romans 1:17; 3:22,26; 4:3,5,13; 9:30; 10:4,6,10
 - 2) I Corinthians 5:21
 - g. Through acts of the Son
 - 1) Romans 5:21-31
 - 2) II Corinthians 5:21
 - 3) Philippians 2:6-11
5. God's will is that His followers be righteous
 - a. Matthew 5:3-48; 7:24-27
 - b. Romans 2:13; 5:1-5; 6:1-23

- c. II Corinthians 6:14
- d. I Timothy 6:11
- e. II Timothy 2:22; 3:16
- f. I John 3:7
- g. I Peter 2:24
- 6. God will judge the world by righteousness
 - a. Acts 17:31
 - b. II Timothy 4:8

Righteousness is a characteristic of God, freely given to sinful mankind through Christ. It is

- 1. a decree of God
- 2. a gift of God
- 3. an act of Christ

But it is also a process of becoming righteous that must be vigorously and steadfastly pursued; it will one day be consummated at the Second Coming. Fellowship with God is restored at salvation, but progresses throughout life to become a face-to-face encounter at death or the Parousia!

Here is a good quote taken from *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* from IVP

“Calvin, more so than Luther, emphasizes the relational aspect of the righteousness of God. Luther’s view of the righteousness of God seems to contain the aspect of acquittal. Calvin emphasizes the marvelous nature of the communication or imparting of God’s righteousness to us” (p. 834).

For me the believer’s relationship to God has three aspects:

- A. the gospel is a person (emphasis of the Eastern Church and Calvin)
- B. the gospel is truth (emphasis of Augustine and Luther)
- C. the gospel is a changed life (emphasis of the Roman Catholic church)

They are all true and must be held together for a healthy, sound, biblical Christianity. If any one is over emphasized or depreciated, problems occur.

We must welcome Jesus!

We must believe the gospel!

We must pursue Christlikeness!

▣ **“HAS ANOINTED YOU”** The Hebrew term “anointed” (*msh*) is the OT word for Messiah (*masiah*). In the OT prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with olive oil as a symbol of God’s choice and provision for an assigned task. In this context it also refers to the cultural usage of olive oil at a time of joy and feasting (cf. Isa. 53:11).

SPECIAL TOPIC: ANOINTING IN THE BIBLE

- A. Used for beautification (cf. Deut. 28:40; Ruth 3:3; II Sam. 12:20; 14:2; II Chr. 28:1-5; Dan. 10:3; Amos 6:6; Mic. 6:15)
- B. Used for guests (cf. Ps. 23:5; Luke 7:38,46; John 11:2)

- C. Used for healing (cf. Isa. 6:1; Jer. 51:8; Mark 6:13; Luke 10:34; James 5:14) [used in hygienic sense in Ezek. 16:9]
- D. Used for preparation for burial (cf. Gen. 50:2; II Chr. 16:14; Mark 16:1; John 12:3,7; 19:39-40)
- E. Used in a religious sense (of an object, cf. Gen. 28:18,20; 31:13 [a pillar]; Exod. 29:36 [the altar]; Exod. 30:36; 40:9-16; Lev. 8:10-13; Num. 7:1 [the tabernacle])
- F. Used for installing leaders
 - 1. Priests
 - a. Aaron (cf. Exod. 28:41; 29:7; 30:30)
 - b. Aaron's sons (cf. Exod. 40:15; Lev. 7:36)
 - c. standard phrase or title (cf. Num. 3:3; Lev. 16:32)
 - 2. Kings
 - a. by God (cf. I Sam. 2:10; II Sam. 12:7; II Kgs. 9:3,6,12; Ps. 45:7; 89:20)
 - b. by the prophets (cf. I Sam. 9:16; 10:1; 15:1,17; 16:3,12-13; I Kgs. 1:45; 19:15-16)
 - c. by priests (cf. I Kgs. 1:34,39; II Kgs. 11:12)
 - d. by the elders (cf. Jdgs. 9:8,15; II Sam. 2:7; 5:3; II Kgs. 23:30)
 - e. of Jesus as Messianic king (cf. Ps. 2:2; Luke 4:18 [Isa. 61:1]; Acts 4:27; 10:38; Heb. 1:9 [Ps. 45:7])
 - f. Jesus' followers (cf. II Cor. 1:21; I John 2:20,27 [*chrisma*])
 - 3. possibly of prophets (cf. Isa. 61:1)
 - 4. unbelieving instruments of divine deliverance
 - a. Cyrus (cf. Isa. 45:1)
 - b. King of Tyre (cf. Ezek. 28:14)
 - 5. term or title "Messiah" means "an Anointed One"

▣ **"ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS"** This is a continuation of the quote from the Septuagint of Ps. 45:6-7. Every detail of the Psalm should not be forced into a theological affirmation relating to Jesus. The phrase could relate to Jesus' superiority over (1) angels; (2) Israeli kings; (3) worldly rulers; or (4) redeemed mankind.

1:10 "YOU LORD" Only the Septuagint translation of Ps. 102:25 includes the word "LORD" which refers to YHWH, but in this context it refers to Jesus. This is another contextual reason why v. 9 also refers to Jesus as "God."

▣ **"laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands"** This is an allusion to 1:2 of Jesus being the Father's agent in creation.

Genesis 1 asserts God's creation by the spoken word (cf. 1:3,6,9,14,20,24,26), while Genesis 2 affirms God's direct personal involvement, implying "hands on" fashioning of Adam and Eve from clay (cf. 2:7,8,19,22). This quote (Ps. 102:25) extends the personal metaphor to all physical creation.

1:11 "THEY WILL PERISH BUT YOU WILL REMAIN; AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD LIKE A GARMENT"

This again shows the eternity of the Son. In the OT the prophets often use a court scene to communicate YHWH's displeasure at His rebellious wife, Israel. He takes "her" (Israel) to divorce court and calls on the two required witnesses (cf. Deut. 19:15)—the two most permanent witnesses, "heaven and earth"—to

corroborate His testimony. Even these two most permanent witnesses will pass away. This quote suggests two possible scenarios: (1) the first verb (*apollumi*) has the connotation of violent destruction (cf. II Pet. 3:10) and (2) the second phrase implies a growing old and passing away like a piece of clothing.

This is another comparison of the instability of the created order (angels, creation) versus the permanence and stability of God's throne and Son!

1:12 “BUT YOU ARE THE SAME” This is a quote from the Septuagint of Ps. 102:27. This same concept (immutability) is used in 13:8 to describe the unchangingness of Jesus. Angels change, heaven and earth change, Jesus does not change, herein is mankind's hope (cf. Mal. 3:6; James 1:17).

▣ **“your years will not come to an end”** As the previous phrase addresses the stability of Jesus' character, this one addresses the permanence of His person.

1:13 “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND” This is a quote from the Septuagint of Ps. 110:1. This is a wonderful Messianic Psalm. It combines the royal (vv. 1-3) and priestly (vv. 4-7) aspects of the Messiah (as do the two olive trees of Zech. 4). Notice the two forms of “lord”; the first is YHWH, the second is *Adon* (Lord). David's Lord (the Messiah) sits on YHWH's (LORD) throne, in the place of authority and power. This never, never, never happens to angels!

1:14 “Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation” Angels exist to serve God and mankind. Redeemed mankind is a higher spiritual order of creation than the angels. Believers will judge the angels (cf. I Cor. 6:3). Jesus did not die to redeem the angels (cf. 2:14-16).

SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK VERB TENSES USED FOR SALVATION

Salvation is not a product, but a relationship. It is not finished when one trusts Christ; it has only begun! It is not a fire insurance policy, nor a ticket to heaven, but a personal relationship with Jesus that issues in daily Christlikeness.

SALVATION AS A COMPLETED ACTION (AORIST TENSE)

- Acts 15:11
- Romans 8:24
- II Timothy 1:9
- Titus 3:5
- Romans 13:11 (combines the AORIST with a FUTURE orientation)

SALVATION AS A STATE OF BEING (PERFECT TENSE)

- Ephesians 2:5,8

SALVATION AS A CONTINUING PROCESS (PRESENT TENSE)

- I Corinthians 1:18; 15:2
- II Corinthians 2:15
- I Peter 3:21; 4:18

SALVATION AS A FUTURE CONSUMMATION (FUTURE in VERB TENSE or context)

- (implied in Matt. 10:22, 24:13; Mark 13:13)
- Romans 5:9,10; 10:9,13

- I Corinthians 3:15; 5:5
- Philippians 1:28;
- I Thessalonians 5:8-9
- I Timothy 4:16
- Hebrews 1:14; 9:28
- I Peter 1:5,9

Therefore, salvation begins with an initial faith decision (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13), but this must issue in a process of lifestyle faith (cf. Rom. 8:29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 2:10), which will one day be consummated in sight (cf. I John 3:2). This final state is called glorification. This can be illustrated as

1. initial salvation—justification (saved from the penalty of sin)
2. progressive salvation—sanctification (saved from the power of sin)
3. final salvation—glorification (saved from the presence of sin).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the emphasis of v. 1?
2. What is the difference between natural and special revelation?
3. List the seven aspects of Jesus' person and work in verses 2-3.
4. Why is this description of Jesus so important to the recipients?
5. How are angels related to Jesus' ministry?