**Hebrews 1 & 2 The Centrality of Christ**

**August 31-September 1, 2016**

*The writer immediately gets to his main point: Christ is the pure revelation of God, the epitome of all truth, and more. God has fully and completely expressed himself in Christ. These verses either mention or allude to a number of unique attributes of Christ – his part in creation, his glory and essence, His governance of the universe, his sacrifice, his exaltation.*

*“Angels”- spirit beings created by God to minister to him and do his bidding. The Jews held angels in very high regard as the highest beings next to God. Because of writings and teachings at the time, Jewish people began to embellish OT teachings about angels. This resulted in a number of dangerous misconceptions that began to spread. One sect has established a community that taught the Archangel Michael’s authority rivaled or surpassed that of the Messiah. The writer of Hebrews clearly disclaims any such concept –the son of God is superior to angels.*

**Hebrews 1**

**Christ: Better than Angels**

**Read Hebrews 1:1 - 14**

How is Jesus superior to the angels?

*(“more excellent name” – that name is Lord, no angel is Sovereign Lord.*

*“Upholding” – the universe and everything in it is sustained by the Son’s powerfully effective word, Col. 1:17.)*

These OT quotes, first said of the Lord God, are now applied to Jesus – what does this imply? What does this say about the relationship between Jesus and God? How does Jesus compare with God in terms of activity, authority and relationship?

*(“heir” – everything that exists will ultimately come under the control of the Son of God, the Messiah. This “inheritance” is the full extension of the authority which the Father has given to the Son (Dan. 7:13-14, Matt. 28:18) as “firstborn” – referring to prominence of position or title, Christ holds the highest position of sovereignty, set apart to the service of God and being preeminent is in entitled to the inheritance*

*“son” – a title expressing His deity and equality with God.*

*“Express image” – perfect imprint, exact representation of the nature and essence of God.*

*“Right hand” – place of power, honor and authority.)*

When did Jesus become more than just a name to you?

What does it mean that Jesus will make His enemies a footstool? What significance does this have for us today?

*(Quote from Psalm 110:1 expressing the sovereignty of Christ over all, see also Phil 2:10, Acts 2:32-38, Matthew 22:4)*

Which of these qualities of Jesus are you beginning to appreciate more?

*(“having become” – refers to change of state, not change of existence. The son in his divine essence has always existed but for a while was made lower than the angels (2:9) and afterward was exalted to high above the angels by virtue of what he accomplished in his redemptive work. One example: the Son who created the universe (John 1:1-3) will one day destroy the heavens and the earth that he created, but he remains unchanged. Immutability is another characteristic of the divine essence. Once again the OT testifies of the Son’s deity.)*

**Hebrews 2**

**God with Us**

**Read Hebrews 2:1-4**

What does it mean to drift away? At what points might you be tempted to drift? If you are drifting or ever have, what brings you back?

*(“earnest heed” and “drift” – nautical connotation, first refers to tying the ship at dock, second used of a ship that was allowed to drift passed the harbor. Secure yourself to the truth of the gospel, being careful not to pass by the only harbor of salvation. The readers in their apathy are in danger of making a shipwreck of their lives.)*

What is the answer to the rhetorical question in v.3?

*(If we take seriously the word given by angels (the law) then how much more seriously should we take this word given by the Son of God, who is shown to be superior to angels)*

**Jesus as Man**

**Read Hebrews 2:6-18**

Considering God’s original design expressed in v. 6-8, why was it necessary for Jesus, God’s son, to become man? How did this allow Him to become the fulfillment of God’s original plan for creation?

*(Now the writer will demonstrate the humanity of Jesus from the Scriptures, and apply the implications of Jesus' humanity. God has put all things (not some things) under subjection to human beings. Christ was not sent in the form of an angel but of man. So, how can Jesus rule and reign over the world to come if He is not human? If so, then God's promise to put the world under subjection to man would be untrue.**It seems to be an unfulfilled promise.*  *God gave man dominion over the earth, but man forfeited his power (not his right or authority) to take that dominion through sin, and the principle of death took away the power to rule. But Jesus came, and through His humility and suffering, defeated the power of death, and makes possible the fulfillment of God's promise that humans will have dominion over the earth - fulfilled both through Jesus' own dominion, and the rule of believers with Him. (Revelation 20:4)* *Conceivably, God could have engineered a way to save us that did not require the suffering of the Son of God; but it was fitting for Jesus to save us at the cost of His own agony. This is the ultimate illustration of the fact that real love, real giving, involves sacrifice. As David said, nor will I offer … offerings to the LORD my God which costs me nothing (2 Samuel 24:24). God's love for us had to show itself in sacrifice, and what could God sacrifice unless He added humanity to His deity and suffered on our behalf? The promise is fulfilled in Jesus, who is Lord over all, and through whom man can regain the dominion originally intended for Adam.*

What does it mean that Christ was made perfect through suffering? What is the goal of His suffering and of our salvation (v.10-11)?

*It isn't that there was anything lacking in His Deity, but only in His experience: how does God in heaven know suffering by experience? "To make perfect does not imply moral imperfection in Jesus, but only the consummation of that human experience of sorrow and pain through which he must pass in order to become the leader of his people's salvation." (Vincent) The point is that it was fitting for the Father to do this, in the sense that it pleased the LORD to bruise Him (Isaiah 53:10) for the sake of bringing many sons to glory.* *Without Christ’s suffering there could be no redemption, without redemption there could be no glorification. Therefore, we are sanctified by One who has been sanctified. We are all of the same human family, so Jesus is not ashamed to call them (that is, us) brethren. He could not be our brother unless He was also human like us. Jesus is not ashamed to call us brethren. But are we ashamed to openly say that we belong to Jesus?*

What did Jesus accomplish by his death as one of us? (V14-16)

*If Jesus were not like us, He could not be our High Priest, representing us before the Father and making atonement (propitiation) for our sins. Neither the Deity nor the Humanity of Jesus are negotiable. If we diminish either then He is unable to save us.*

What does it mean that Jesus authors salvation?

*(“author” – pioneer, leader, originator, Christ is the source, the initiator and the leader in regard to our salvation – he has led the way into heaven as our forerunner – because of the perfect righteousness of Christ and his perfect sacrifice for sin, he became the cause of salvation. The High Priest wore a breastplate that had stones, engraved with the names of the tribes of Israel, on both his chest and his shoulders. The High Priest would therefore be in constant sympathy with the people of God, carrying them on his heart and in his work (on the shoulders). Jesus did not wear the High Priest's breastplate; but the wound in His chest and the cross on His shoulders are even more eloquent testimony to His heart for us and work on our behalf - to make propitiation for the sins of the people. "propitiation" - to satisfy, related to Christ's high priestly ministry, by his partaking of a human nature, Christ demonstrated his mercy to humankind and his faithfulness to God by satisfying God's requirement for sin and thus obtaining for his people full forgiveness (1 John 4:10))*

How do the achievements and example of Jesus encourage you?

*(Because Jesus added humanity to His deity, and has experienced human suffering, Jesus is able to aid those who are being tempted and when we are suffering. He really does know what you are going through! It is astonishing: there is a God in Heaven who by experience knows what I am going through, and can aid me, not just feel bad for me! "This is the most powerful preservative against despair, and the firmest ground of hope and comfort, that ever believing, penitent sinners could desire or have." (Poole) "Were the rest of the Scripture silent on this subject, this verse might be an ample support for every tempted soul.")*

**Read Colossians 1:13-22**

How does this relate to what we have read so far in Hebrews? What do these passages say about Jesus?