
*The Warning Passages in Hebrews
Part 1 (of 5 parts):*

The Eschatological Salvation of Hebrews 1:5–2:5

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A study of eschatology offers Christians an impetus for a closer walk with the Lord and a godly life before others. Though believers may face difficult problems, they belong to the supreme King of eternity. Having a relationship with Christ and the promise of final victory over the enemies of God should motivate Christians to make obedience and service to God their chief desire. Walking in obedience to His Word today will result in rewards in the coming millennial rule of Jesus Christ.

The Book of Hebrews emphasizes the importance of believers living with a view to future service in the Lord's millennial kingdom. The writer directed his readers to this future viewpoint throughout the epistle, especially in the five warning passages (2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 6:4-12; 10:26-39; 12:25-29).

Hebrews opens with the writer's main thesis, dealing with the superiority of Christ. Hebrews 1 describes Christ's supremacy in revealing God over the previous revelation of God to the patriarchs by the prophets of the Old Testament (1:1-2a). It also declares the supremacy of the Son in His essential being and ongoing activities in the present (1:2b-4) as well as in the coming eschatological kingdom (1:5-14). Hebrews 1:1-4, the prologue of the epistle, is bound together as one unbroken grammatical construction in

Greek,¹ with the central assertion (v. 2) that God has spoken *ἐν υἱῷ* ("in Son"). Being anarthrous, the word "Son" stresses the quality of His person.² Though the prologue does not contain an explicit warning, the foundation is laid for the first caveat in 2:1-4 by demonstrating the unique person and character of Christ. The prologue, through a triad of relative clauses, expands on the person of the Son.

The idea of the Son's heirship (*κληρονόμον πάντων*, "heir of all things," 1:2) points to His eschatological role as King in the millennial kingdom.³ The idea of inheritance is seen in that Christ has inherited a name—the title "Son" (v. 4)—which is better than that of the angels. This title of Son (*υἱός*) in verse 5 is identical with "name" (*ὄνομα*) in verse 4. At Christ's ascension and exaltation to the right hand of the Father the title "Son" was conferred.⁴ Of course Christ has always been the eternal Son of God, possessing full deity forever. But in a special way His title of "Son" as Davidic Heir was conferred at His exaltation. Verse 4 closes the prologue and also ties it to verses 5-14, as the word "angels" used in 1:4-5, 13-14 forms an inclusio, a device used throughout the book.⁵ Hebrews 1:5-14 contains a catena⁶ that builds on Psalm 110:1. Psalm 110 is alluded to in Hebrews 1:3 and is quoted in 1:13. It is a key eschatological psalm demonstrating the Son's assured victory and rule over His enemies in the coming kingdom age. The catena is divided into three parts: (a) Christ as the King-Son (1:5), (b) the prerogatives of the Son (1:6-12), and (c) the victorious Son (1:13-14). The unifying theme of the catena based on Psalm 110:1 is the supremacy of the Son.

¹ Brook Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1889; reprint, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), p. 3.

² Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, ed. Cleon L. Rogers, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 663.

³ Zane C. Hodges, "Hebrews," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, New Testament edition, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, SP Publications, 1983), p. 781.

⁴ Ernest Käsemann, *Das wandernde Gottesvolk* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1939), p. 58.

⁵ George Wesley Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1972), pp. xxv-xxvi.

⁶ James W. Thompson, "The Structure and Purpose of the Catena in Heb. 1:5-13," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 38 (1976): 352-63.

Old Testament Quotations in Hebrews 1:5-14

In Hebrews 1:5-14 the writer quoted from six psalms and 2 Samuel 7 to show the Son's supremacy in the coming eschatological rule. These verses lead up to and prepare the reader for the warning in Hebrews 2:1-5. Since Christ is superior now and in the future to the angels and His enemies, believers should heed the import of those truths.

HEBREW 1:5a AND PSALM 2:7

Psalm 2 is one of several royal enthronement psalms, which should be understood within the context of the Davidic Covenant in which Yahweh promised David that his line would endure forever (2 Sam. 7:8-16; Ps. 89).⁷ Each Davidic descendant was perceived as being adopted by the Lord according to the words of the covenant, "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me" (2 Sam. 7:14). This adoptive son was then God's leader on earth, marked out to mediate the Lord's will among his subjects.

"Today" in Psalm 2:7 refers to the day of a king's enthronement or official inauguration as king. Anderson writes,

Today probably refers to the day of coronation or, perhaps, to its reenactment during the annual autumn festival. The idea of begetting may be on the part of the non-Israelite prototype of the royal document, but in our context it can only refer to the adoption of the king and the declaration of his sonship.⁸

Hebrews 1:4 alludes to this point of adoption by using the perfect tense for the Son's inheritance (*κεκληρονόμηκεν*) of a more excellent name, the title "Son." The official title of "Son" was bestowed after Christ's resurrection, ascension, and positioning at the right hand of the majesty on high (1:3). This is surely the occasion to which the writer referred in 5:5-6, which, by quoting both Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:4, associates the high priesthood with this event. It should be clarified that though Christ received His royal dignity through the title "Son" on the day of His enthronement, He has not yet received His millennial kingdom over which He will rule (Heb. 2:8). The final fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant will be in the person of Jesus Christ as King.

⁷ Ronald B. Allen, *When Song Is New: Understanding the Kingdom in the Psalms* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983), p. 157.

⁸ A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms, The New Bible Commentary*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), 1:63-64.

The King will take possession of His kingdom after the nations and enemies of Messiah are "shatter[ed] like earthenware" (Ps. 2:9). The victory of the King and His kingdom is assured because the Father has bestowed on Him the title "Son."

HEBREWS 1:5b AND 2 SAMUEL 7:14

Hebrews 1:5b quotes 2 Samuel 7:14 (cf. 1 Chron. 17:13). Both Old Testament passages refer to the Davidic Covenant and the heir. The continuative sense of *καὶ πάλιν* ("and again") bridges this quotation with the one from Psalm 2:7 in Hebrews 1:5a. Christ the Davidic King is the "Fulfiller" of the Davidic Covenant.

HEBREWS 1:6 AND PSALM 97:7

Hebrews 1:6-12, the second division of the catena, contrast the role of the Son with the role of angels in the age to come. Verse 6 begins with an introductory formula directing the readers to the eschatological context. Scholars differ on why *πάλιν* ("again") is used. Some say it simply introduces this passage as in 1:5b and 2:13. Bruce is a strong proponent of this position.⁹ This would mean that the verse is referring to the Incarnation.

Others such as Windisch see this as occurring at Christ's enthronement.¹⁰ Opposing this position are Westcott,¹¹ Dods,¹² and Hewitt,¹³ who suggest a third view, namely, that *πάλιν* modifies the verb *εἰσαγάγει* ("brings in") and is a reference to Christ's second advent. The passage would then point to a specific eschatological event. This understanding of *πάλιν* is preferable for several reasons. First, *πάλιν* follows the subordinate temporal conjunction *ὅταν δέ* ("and when"), thereby making *πάλιν* a part of the clause and not merely an introduction to it. Second, the use of the subjunctive mood in the verb *εἰσαγάγει* argues for a future event,

⁹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 15.

¹⁰ Hans Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief* (Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr, 1931), p. 15.

¹¹ Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, pp. 21-23.

¹² Marcus Dods, "The Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961), 4:254.

¹³ Thomas Hewitt, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), pp. 55-56.

rather than the past act of the Incarnation. Third, *οἰκουμένην* ("world") in 1:6 is also used in 2:5, where it refers explicitly to the future and directs the readers to an eschatological context. Hebrews 1:6, then, as Kent suggests, refers to the ministry of angels at the second advent of Christ (cf. Matt. 16:27; 25:31; 2 Thess. 1:7).¹⁴

The source of the Old Testament quotation in Hebrews 1:6 is the Septuagint version of Psalm 97:7b. This psalm is an enthronement psalm,¹⁵ with an eschatological setting. Hebrews 1:6 relates to the catastrophic events of the second advent of Christ, and Psalm 97 displays a similar setting.

As we often find in the briefer poems of the Psalter, Psalm 97 has three movements: 1) verses 1-6, 2) verses 7-9, and 3) verses 10-12.

In the first movement of the poem we find that *the reign of King Jesus will manifest itself in an awful display of His majesty*. In this description I am deliberately using the word "awful" with a double intent: 1) to the righteous, His majesty will be awe-provoking; but 2) to the wicked it will be repulsive and condemning.¹⁶

Psalm 97 then refers to the destruction of the king's enemies and the deliverance of God's people.

HEBREWS 1:7 AND PSALM 104:4

Hebrews 1:7 is based on Psalm 104, which is a creation psalm.¹⁷ Hebrews 1:7 is linked with verse 6 by *καί* ("and") and contrasts with verse 8. In their role of serving the Father the angels are related to elements in creation ("winds" and "fire"). The Son is seen in verses 10-12 as Creator and as unchanging in nature. This contrasts with the angels, who are created beings. Angels will serve while the Son will rule in the coming age (vv. 13-14).

HEBREWS 1:8-9 AND PSALM 45:6-7

Psalm 45 is a marriage ode written to celebrate a royal wedding. Various kings have been suggested as the hero for whom the psalm was written,¹⁸ but the writer of Hebrews applied it to

¹⁴ Homer Kent, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), p. 42.

¹⁵ Claus Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content, and Message* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1980), pp. 113-14.

¹⁶ Allen, *When Song Is New*, p. 196 (italics added).

¹⁷ Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content, and Message*, p. 97.

¹⁸ H. C. Leopold, *Exposition of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House,

Christ (cf. John's allusion to this psalm in Rev. 19:6-21, in his description of Christ, the Davidic King, and His bride, the church).

In Hebrews 1:8-9 the author addressed the Son as God with the vocative, *ὁ θεός* ("O God"), thus ascribing full deity to the messianic King. The fact that Christ's throne will last forever and ever is reminiscent of the Lord's covenant with David: "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever" (2 Sam. 7:16). The writer of Hebrews thus envisioned the eschatological rule of Messiah in His kingdom.

The King's rule will be noted for righteousness and justice, according to Hebrews 1:8-9. This parallels many passages in the Old Testament that predict the Messiah's righteous rule (e.g., Isa. 9:7; 11:4; 58-66).

The writer to the Hebrews extended his quotation of Psalm 45:7 to include the anointing of the king and *τοὺς μετόχους σου* ("Thy companions"). Bruce comments on this extending of the quotation: "In the present context, however, the term 'companion' must have a special meaning—unless we say that our author has simply allowed the quotation to run on without attaching any particular significance to its closing words *which is improbable*."¹⁹

The word *μετόχους* ("companion") is equivalent in Hebrews to the Hebrew *חֵבֵר* ("companion") from the verb *חָבַר* ("to be joined to or have fellowship with"). The Septuagint used *μέτοχος* nine times as the equivalent of *חֵבֵר* in referring to a "companion" or one "joined with" another.²⁰ The Hebrew noun refers to an associate, one who has a close bond with another person.

The term *haber* is also used to express the very close relationship that exists between people in various walks of life. Israelites were "united as one man" (RSV) in their war against the Benjamites because of their outrageous crime (Jud 20:11). Men can be very closely joined together as thieves (Isa 1:23), as destroyers (Prov 28:24), and as corrupt priests likened to ambushing robbers (Hos 6:9).²¹

1969), p. 351.

¹⁹ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 21 (italics added).

²⁰ Edwin Hatch and Henry Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint*, 2 vols. (reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 2:918.

²¹ *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. "חֵבֵר," by Gerard Van Groningen, 1:260.

The word *μέτοχος* was used in classical Greek to refer to a wife, a business partner, a member of a board of officials, and a joint owner of a house.²² Here too the concept of close association is in view. In Koiné Greek usage outside the New Testament, the word *μέτοκος* was commonly used in the sense of a "sharer" or "partner." It was used of the "associate collectors of public clothing for the guards," of payment "to Sotas and associates, collector of money-taxes," of "colleagues," and a "joint-owner of a holding whose price is under discussion."²³

The concept of believers being *μέτοκοι* with Christ is a key theme throughout Hebrews. The term is used in 3:1 ("partakers of a heavenly calling"); 3:14 ("partakers of Christ"); 6:4 ("partakers of the Holy Spirit"); and 12:8 ("discipline, of which all have become partakers"). This word is almost unique to Hebrews; for it appears only one other time in the New Testament, in Luke 5:7, which refers to Peter's "partners" in fishing²⁴ ("partners" in Luke 5:10 translates *κολληνοί*).

Windisch²⁵ and Moffatt²⁶ understand the companions in Hebrews 1:9 to be angels. However, this can hardly be the case, because nowhere else are angels said to be Christ's companions. Also that idea is inconsistent with the four other occurrences of "companions" in Hebrews, none of which refer to angels. Rather than the angels' being companions of Christ, they are contrasted with the Son in lesser roles and functions.

The term *μετόχους* is best understood as referring to those who will be partners of Christ the King in His earthly millennial rule. As Bruce observes, "It is most likely that the reference is to the 'many sons' of Ch. 2:10, whom the firstborn Son is not ashamed to call His 'brethren' (Ch. 2:11), and who are designated in Ch. 3:14

²² Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (1907; reprint, revised and augmented by Henry Stuart Jones and Robert McKenzie, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 1122.

²³ James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1930), p. 406 (italics his).

²⁴ W. F. Moulton and A. S. Geden, *A Concordance to the Greek Testament*, 3d ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1926), p. 638.

²⁵ Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief*, p. 16.

²⁶ James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924), p. 11.

as the Messiah's *metachoi*—the same Greek word as is here (1:9) translated 'fellows.'²⁷

Μέτοχοι is used in Hebrews as a direct reference to Christians (3:1, 14; 6:4; 12:8). The author's extending the Psalm 45 quotation to include the concept of *μέτοχοι* was apparently for the purpose of directing his readers to see their part in Messiah's joyful rule.

The anointing with the "oil of gladness" suggests festivity and rejoicing (cf. Isa. 61:1-3). Since the reign of the Davidic King will be characterized by righteousness and justice, the Messiah will have joy in His rule and His "companions" will participate with Him.

HEBREWS 1:10-12 AND PSALM 102:25-27

Hebrews 1:10-12 quotes from Psalm 102, a psalm of an individual lamenting the victory of his enemies.²⁸ The psalmist was overwhelmed by his enemies (vv. 1-11), but then he found consolation in the fact that the Lord will not abandon those who love Him but will deliver them (vv. 12-22).

Though creation will perish like an old garment or rolled-up mantle, the Son will remain; His years do not end (Heb. 1:10-12). These comparisons point to the eschaton, when the final transformation of all things will occur (Isa. 66:22; Heb. 12:26-27; Rev. 6:14; 21:1).²⁹ The universe, seemingly so permanent and established, will be rolled up, changed, and replaced by new heavens and a new earth. The writer to the Hebrews quoted Psalm 102:25-27 to show that the Son is eternal and is Lord over the created order.³⁰

The phrase *τὰ ἔτη σου* ("Thy years") in Hebrews 1:12 does not suggest that God marks off time by years as mortals do. The phrase suggests that God is eternal and unchanging. The Messiah's kingdom will be unending because the Messiah is eternal.

HEBREWS 1:13-14 AND PSALM 110:1

Hebrews 1:13-14 forms the third section of the catena that began in verse 5. These verses concern the ultimate victory of the Son

²⁷ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 21.

²⁸ Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content, and Message*, p. 55.

²⁹ Leon Morris, "Hebrews," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 12:19.

³⁰ Anton Vögtle, *Das neue Testament und die Zukunft des Kosmos* (Dusseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1970), pp. 95-97.

over His enemies. Psalm 110, alluded to in Hebrews 1:3, is quoted in 1:13. An inclusio is seen in the references to angels in verses 4-5 and 13-14 and in the use of the verb *κληρονομέω* ("inherit") in verses 4 and 14. Verses 13 and 14 are the zenith of the catena of the Old Testament quotations in chapter 1 of this epistle.

Psalm 110 is crucial in the argument of Hebrews because of its king-priest motif. Psalm 110 is quoted or alluded to 12 times in the epistle (1:3, 13; 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:3, 11, 17, 21; 8:1; 10:13; 12:2). This psalm forms the foundation of Hebrews 7-10, the central doctrinal section which elaborates on the nature of the Son's high priesthood.

In the time of Christ, Psalm 110 was understood as messianic, as seen in Mark 12:35-37. Jesus clarified for the Pharisees that the Son of David was also the Lord of David (i.e., the Messiah is of Davidic descent and is the Lord).

Psalm 110:1a is cited by the writer to the Hebrews in referring to Christ's position at the right hand of God. As Allen writes,

The sitting of Christ at the right hand of the Father is an act of anticipation on His part of the coming of the kingdom of God on earth, the subjugation of all the nations to Himself, and the beginning of His righteous rule. Today He is active head over one nation, the church. Tomorrow, He will reign over all nations, the world. The sitting of Christ is not passive, but active. The sitting of Christ at the right hand of Majesty is complex, speaking of His royalty, His priesthood, and His coming rule.³¹

The author of Hebrews then quoted Psalm 110:1b to speak of the enemies of King Jesus as utterly subjugated. The foes of Messiah will be completely powerless; His enemies will be like His footstool. "Treating one's enemies as a footstool is a metaphor drawn from the Old Testament of a conquering king placing his foot upon the neck of a vanquished king to emphasize his triumph. The psalm depicts the future reign over the Messianic kingdom and all enemies will be finally brought into submission."³²

The readers of Hebrews were undergoing persecution, reproach, and tribulations (Heb. 10:32-36). The writer reassured them that their enemies, as enemies of Christ, will one day be brought into complete subjugation to the King. The Messiah's future victory will become their victory.

³¹ Allen, *When Song Is New*, pp. 175-76.

³² Kent, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 46.

The catena closes with a statement concerning the ministry of angels to those who will inherit salvation (1:14). The angels again are pictured in a lower function, that of serving those who are to "inherit salvation." What does *σωτηρία* ("salvation") mean? The most common understanding of the term is soteriological, meaning justification or final deliverance from hell. However, this concept of salvation is never alluded to in Hebrews 1. Nothing in chapter 1 implies a soteriological meaning.

The Old Testament quotations in Hebrews 1 help explain the meaning of *σωτηρία* in verse 14. The usual Hebrew equivalent of the Greek term is related to *נָצַח* ("to save"). Hartley discusses the concept of salvation conveyed by *נָצַח* in the Old Testament:

To move from distress to safety requires deliverance. Generally the deliverance must come from somewhere outside the party oppressed. In the OT the kinds of distress, both national and individual, include enemies, natural catastrophies, such as plague or famine or sickness. . . . But generally in the OT the word has strong religious meaning, for it was Yahweh who wrought the deliverance.³³

In the Old Testament, "salvation" usually refers to the Lord's deliverance of His people from their enemies or trouble. Because of the extensive use of references from the Psalms in Hebrews, the meaning of *σωτηρία* in verse 14 requires this Old Testament concept. In the Psalms salvation most often refers to Yahweh's delivering His own from their enemies and their enjoyment of His blessings (e.g., Pss. 3:2, 8; 17:13; 34:19; 37:39; 44:4-8; 69:29-33; 118:14-25; 140:6-8; 144:9-11). Therefore the meaning of salvation in Hebrews 1:14 must be related to deliverance from the enemies of God in His kingdom rule as defined by the six psalms quoted in Hebrews 1:5-13. This salvation is eschatological. As "companions" (v. 9), the readers will have a role in this deliverance or *σωτηρία* over the Lord's enemies and will participate in the millennial kingdom.

This salvation is understood as future because it is promised to "those who will inherit salvation." The verb *μέλλω* in 1:14 is also used in 2:5, which certainly is eschatological, for it clearly refers to the coming age in which Christ will reign.³⁴

³³ *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, s.v. "נָצַח," by John E. Hartley, 1:414.

³⁴ William F. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich

Σωτηρία is used several times in the epistle in an eschatological sense. Hebrews 1:14 and 9:28 include explicit eschatological uses of "salvation," thus making it possible for 2:3 to be eschatological. Also in 2:10; 5:9; and 6:9 "salvation" could be eschatological. The reference to Noah's deliverance in 11:7 is an apparent exception. In six of the seven uses of *σωτηρία* in Hebrews, an eschatological meaning is an acceptable exegetical option.

The Warning of Hebrews 2:1-5: The Neglect of Salvation

Hebrews 2:1-5 is the first of five warnings in the epistle (2:1-5; 3:7-4:13; 6:4-8; 10:26-39; 12:25-29).³⁵ These passages were addressed to the entire readership, not just part of it (13:22).

HEBREWS 2:1

The warning opens with a connective *διὰ τοῦτο* ("For this reason"), which links what follows to the argument set forth in chapter 1. Since Christ is superior to the angels and they serve Him, since He will share the joy of His rule with His companions, and since He will make subject all His enemies, the readers are to "heed closely the things that have been heard" (author's translation).

The author of Hebrews included himself in the warnings,³⁶ as is evident in 2:1, 3 from the use of the pronoun "we." No reason exists for saying 2:1-4 was addressed to only a segment of the readership. That the author understood himself as being within the possibility of failure is a realistic view of his fallen humanity.

The language is strong: *δεῖ περισσοτέρως προσέχειν ἡμᾶς* ("we must pay much closer attention"). The readers are to give keen attention *τοῖς ἀκουσθεῖσιν* ("to the things that have been heard"). This exhortation would draw the initial readers back to 1:1-4, which refers to God's having spoken in the Son. The things heard were the teachings of Christ. More specifically they were things concerning "the world to come" (2:5), that is, the kingdom.

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 502.

³⁵ For a discussion of the eschatological perspective of each of the warnings in Hebrews see this writer's work, "An Analysis and Exposition of the Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews" (ThD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984).

³⁶ Hodges, "Hebrews," p. 738.

The author warned against the danger of drifting away (*παραρῳμεν*) from the fundamental hopes related to eschatological salvation (i.e., the Messiah's second advent and His kingdom). The Greek verb occurs only here in the New Testament. In classical Greek it meant "to flow beside or past, to slip off, having disappeared from memory, or to slip into the windpipe."³⁷ In the Septuagint the word is used in Proverbs 3:21 to refer to a father's counsel that is not to slip away, and in Isaiah 44:4 it is used of running water.³⁸ In Koiné Greek outside the New Testament the word was used of the slipping of a covering stretched along a ship's side for protection.³⁹ The author to the Hebrews was concerned that his readers not slowly slip away from the fundamental teaching concerning the Messiah's future deliverance and kingdom.

HEBREWS 2:2

In this verse the writer drew attention to the Old Testament principle that disobedience to the Law brought discipline. "The word spoken through angels" refers to the Lord's giving of the Mosaic Law as recorded in Exodus 19-20 (cf. the reference to the role of angels in Gal. 3:19).

The Law was given for the purpose of defining the conditions for obedience and discipline of Israel, the Lord's covenant people. Deuteronomy 28-30 stipulated the blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience. The principle of cursing for disobedience is what the writer to the Hebrews had in view when he wrote in 2:2 of "transgression" (*παράβασις*), "disobedience" (*παρακοή*), and "just recompense" (*ἐνδικὸν μισθαποδοσίαν*).

The Mosaic Law was never given as a means of justification before God. Justification in each dispensation is always by grace through an individual's faith in God. The "just recompense" deals not with the issue of soteriological retribution but of blessing and discipline under the Mosaic system. When a person broke the Law, the retribution he received was not loss of salvation. Instead he lost temporal blessings and was disciplined. Later in Hebrews 12:5-11 discipline is discussed at some length by the writer.

³⁷ Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 1322-23.

³⁸ Hatch and Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint*, 2:1063.

³⁹ Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 489.

While showing the inviolability of the Mosaic Law, Hebrews 2:2 is not addressing the subjects of soteriology and eternal life.

HEBREWS 2:3

In this verse the warning passage comes to its climax. The readers are warned they will not escape if they "neglect so great a salvation." What they will not escape from is not clearly specified. However, it seems evident that it must be related to the "just recompense" mentioned in verse 2. This "recompense" means being disciplined (12:5-11) for disobedience. The readers, by their neglect of this salvation, may place themselves in a position requiring discipline from the Lord, not as the covenant people Israel, but as individual believers before God. This principle of believers' being disciplined for disobedience to the Lord is also mentioned in 1 Corinthians 11:27-34 and 1 John 5:16.

A crucial point in this section hinges on the word "salvation" in Hebrews 2:3. Spicq argues that this salvation is the gospel, God's plan of redemption from sin through Christ.⁴⁰ However, this can hardly be the case because the same Greek word is used in 1:14, where, as discussed, it clearly refers to eschatological deliverance and participation in the millennial kingdom. Because the connective *διὰ τοῦτο* ("For this reason," 2:1) links the argument of chapter 1 with the warning in 2:1-5, *σωτηρία* must have the same meaning. Hodges writes of this use of the term "salvation" in Hebrews 2:3: "The 'salvation,' of course, is the same as that just mentioned in 1:14 and alludes to the readers' potential share in the Son's triumphant dominion, in which He has 'companions' (1:9)."⁴¹ Hebrews 2:5 clarifies that this salvation is eschatological since it is a part of the topic pertaining to "the world to come, concerning which we are speaking."

This eschatological message of the coming age is said to have been "confirmed to us by those who heard" (2:3). This statement indicates that neither the writer nor the readers had received this truth directly from Christ but from those who had been instructed by Him.⁴² The writer again included himself as a part of the readership in the phrase *εἰς ἡμᾶς* ("to us").

⁴⁰ C. Spicq, *L'épître aux hébreux*, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1952), 2:25.

⁴¹ Hodges, "Hebrews," pp. 783-84.

⁴² Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 62-63.

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This message was confirmed by God to the readers through those who delivered it "by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit." Signs (*σημείους*), wonders (*τέρασιν*), and various miracles (*ποικίλαις δυνάμεσιν*) authenticated the message of the apostles (Acts 14:3; 2 Cor. 12:12).

The word *μερισμοῖς* ("gifts") is literally "distributions" or "apportionments." Hughes says these apportionments are "the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit through the impartation of His gifts."⁴³ The fact that the readers had received spiritual gifts indicated they were true believers (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7, 11-13).

HEBREWS 2:5

With the word *γάρ* ("for") the writer proceeded to clinch the exhortation in verses 1-4. "As the new revelation is not mediated through angels so they (believers) also are not to glorify the angels."⁴⁴ The author clarified that angels are not the ones who will rule the world to come; only the Son and His companions will reign.

The phrase *τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν* ("the world to come") is eschatological, referring to the millennial kingdom. As already stated, Hebrews 2:5 indicates that the topic under discussion is eschatological. Verse 8 clarifies that the present age is not the kingdom age, for "all things" have not yet been placed in subjection to the Son. It is therefore impossible to understand the kingdom as being realized now. According to the Book of Hebrews the rule and reign of Christ with His "companions" is an eschatological event. Believers look with eager anticipation to that day.

Conclusion

The writer of Hebrews uses seven eschatological passages in Hebrews 1:5-14 to demonstrate Jesus' right to rule in the coming millennial kingdom. Because of this extensive quoting from six psalms and 2 Samuel 7, the term *σωτηρία* ("salvation") in Hebrews 1:14 is best understood in the Old Testament sense as deliv-

⁴³ Ibid., p. 81.

⁴⁴ Windisch, *Der Hebräerbrief*, p. 19.

erance from the enemies of Yahweh and participation in His kingdom.

The readers of the epistle are viewed as *μέτοχοι*, "companions" of the coming King (1:9). This relationship assures them of an ultimate victory in the final "salvation" provided by the King (1:13-14). His victory will be in part their victory.

The warning of Hebrews 2:1-5 is linked by *δὲ τούτο* ("for this reason") with the entire argument of Hebrews 1. Because of the Son's superiority to angels (1:1-5), the angels' worship of and service to Him at His coming (1:6-7), His future rule and sharing of joy with His companions (1:8-9), and the future subjugation of His enemies (1:10-14), the readers would do well to heed these eschatological teachings. Neglect of this eschatological salvation (cf. 1:14; 2:3, 5) may result in individual temporal discipline similar to that experienced under the Old Covenant (2:2). The "salvation" of 2:3 is the same as that in 1:14. Hebrews 2:5 clarifies that the *σωτηρία* under discussion is eschatological.