

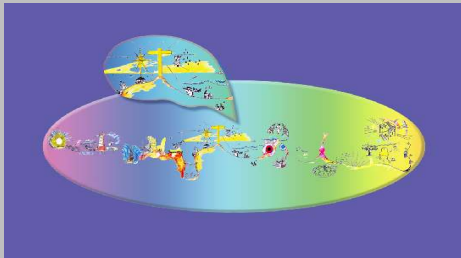
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We believe in one GOD, in three persons; FATHER, SON and HOLY SPIRIT. We regard the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) as the only infallible authoritative WORD OF GOD.

HULDAH MINISTRY aims to return to the Word Of God, founded on Hebrew background and to interpret it from Hebraic perspective, acknowledging that Jesus is a Jew and the Jewish-ness of His teaching as a continuation from the Hebrew Bible. The Ministry also aims to put His teaching into practice, to have a closer relationship with the Lord, Jesus Christ, and to regularly have a Christian fellowship so that this-worldly kingdom of God will materialise in the midst of the followers of Jesus here and now, as well as earnestly seeking Christ's Return to establish the otherworldly Kingdom of God on earth.

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HULDAH MINISTRY

LETTER TO THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

【 SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST TO ANGELS】

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

For to which of the angels did God ever say, ① "You are my Son; today I have become your father"?

Or again, ② "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"?

And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, ③ "Let all God's angels worship him."

In speaking of the angels he says, ④ "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire."

But about the Son he says, ⑤ "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore, God your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."

He also says, ⑥ "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end."

To which of the angels did God ever say, ⑦ "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

HEBREWS

1:1~14. ①~⑦ (showing quotations) added.

The New Testament has three sections: The Gospels and Acts (Accounts), Epistles (Exposition), and The Revelation (Revelation). Generally speaking, the second section contains two categories of apostolic letters:

- (1) Pauline letters consisting of Paul's thirteen letters (Romans — 2 Thessalonians addressed to churches and 1 Timothy — Philemon addressed to the individual) and
- (2) General or catholic letters (Hebrews — Jude).

"Romans" heads the first category, i.e., the list of the Pauline Epistles, and "Hebrews" heads the second category, i.e., the list of the general or catholic Epistles. The head Epistles of each category, i.e., "Romans" and "Hebrews" deal with doctrines. While the former expounds the moral law, leading ultimately to God's grace, the latter expounds the ceremonial law, leading from a copy and shadow of what is in heaven to substance. The first category of Epistles headed by "Romans" was addressed to Gentiles and Gentile Christians, while the second headed by "Hebrews" was addressed to Jews and Jewish converts. It is apparent from the opening sentence of "the Epistle to the Hebrews", to whom the letter was addressed: ***'In the past God spoke to our forefathers ...,'*** in that the author writes in such a way that Jews would write to Jews. Despite certain similarities between "Romans" and "Hebrews" and also internal evidence traced in "Hebrews" such as thoughts and reasoning, all indications of which favour the Pauline authorship, there has been no agreement regarding its authorship. Although for some time the book was called "The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews," it has been claimed since the Reformation that Paul could not have been the author because of the marked difference of its language, its style and its emphasis. Moreover, the Epistle is anonymous, contrary to Paul's usual way and also, it is addressed to Jews whereas all of Paul's other letters were addressed to Gentiles. However, among the numerous people being suggested as the author of the Epistle, including Apollos, Barnabas and even Priscilla (the wife of Aquila), Paul appears to be the most favourable candidate. Despite the fact that Apollos has been favoured by many scholars today since Martin Luther's first suggestion, there are still many reasons to favour Paul.

Firstly, Paul has always provided his unique token to identify him at the end of his Epistles, which Paul himself clearly expressed in the following way: ***'I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.'*** (2The. 3:17-18). Knowing that deceptions were rife in those days; ***'by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us'*** (2The. 2:2, Line added), Paul characterised his Epistles by a salutation putting emphasis on the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, all his thirteen Epistles are closed with this salutation and interestingly, "Hebrews" is no exception. Considering the fact that all other general Epistles written by other authors end completely differently except "2Peter", which refers to 'grace' in somewhat different meaning as Paul used in his letters, the difference between the two categories of letters is outstanding.

Secondly, there is a quite fascinating reference to one of Paul's Epistles in the passage of "2Peter" written shortly before Peter's death, in which Peter circumstantially says: ***'Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just our dear brother, Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.'***(2Pe.3:15-16, Line added). The fact that Peter wrote to the Jewish Christians who had been scattered abroad in both "1 Peter" and "2 Peter" indicates that the Paul's Epistle that Peter mentioned here was not among Paul's thirteen Epistles addressed to the Gentiles but should have been one addressed to the Jews, distinctive from the rest of Paul's letters. Therefore, Peter must have referred to "the Epistle to the Hebrews", which actually contains very hard teaching especially for such Jewish converts that were being tempted to revert to Judaism or to return to the observation of Old Testament rituals and sacrificial systems after being fully enlightened by the gospel of Christ. If the authorship of "Hebrews" is accredited to Paul, it should be concluded to have been written before "2Peter" was written (very likely between 65 and 68 CE), that it was written in the early days of church history and probably between 60 and 64 CE, apparently before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE.

Thirdly, another possible reason why “Hebrews” was left anonymous contrary to Paul’s usual practice of prefixing his name, might be related to the situation which Paul was being confronted with, in that Paul and his ministry were regarded highly suspiciously among the Jews. Therefore, if he were urged to defend the Christian faith against its opposers or legalistic Judaizers, i.e., Jewish Christians who believed that ceremonial practices of the Hebrew Bible were still binding in the New testament church, Paul would have had plenty of reasons for the necessity of concealing his name.

Added to these reasons, H. A. Ironside, one of the 20th century’s greatest preachers, gives an interesting insight, saying: “This letter is the last of a series of three Epistles forming together a divinely inspired commentary on one Old Testament text, namely Habakkuk 2:4, “The just shall live by faith.” Romans expounds the first two words and shows who alone are “the just” before God. Galatians continues the wondrous story and explains how the just “shall live.” Having begun in the Spirit they are not to be made perfect by the flesh, but they live by the same faith that justifies. Hebrews completes the story, showing that it is “by faith” God’s pilgrim people walk through this world to His praise and glory. It is likely that he who is a God of order chose Paul to write Romans and Galatians, but selected some unknown writer to give us Hebrews? Is it not very much more probable that the same servant wrote all three Epistles?” (Ironside, 1996, *Hebrews*, Loizeaux, P.18. Emphases added).

Paul, who once declared: ***‘Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law’*** (1Co.9:19-20), might probably have tried to act in accordance with their acceptance without insisting his own way. Thus, he would have written his appeal in a style attractive to the Jews abroad, yet, in the light of the new revelation, where Greek philosophy had deeply filtered into Judaism and their way of thinking, by quoting all the scriptural passages from “the Septuagint” translation (a Greek version of the Hebrew Bible; the first translated Hebrew Bible in Egypt in the third century BCE, rendered into Greek by 70 or 72 Jewish scholars) except two passages, 10:30 and 13:5. It is noteworthy that one of the exceptions regarding the quotation in “Hebrews” seems to unwittingly reveal its Pauline authorship. Hebrews 10:30 reads, ***‘For we know him who said, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” and again, “the Lord will judge his people.”’*** (Lines show the quotations) These two quotations are taken from Deuteronomy 32:35-36, however, while the second one is an exact quotation from the Hebrew Bible, the first is the author’s own rendering of the Scripture, which coincidentally turns out to be the exact same rendering adopted in Romans 12:19. If the author of “Romans” is Paul, then the authorship of “Hebrews” is likely to be Paul’s too.

“Hebrew” explores “Leviticus” in the Hebrew Bible. “Leviticus” was given to the people of God, Israel when they were in the wilderness, whose experiences there were that of pilgrimage until finally being led to ‘a Sabbath-rest for the people of God,’ i.e., an entrance into the promised land Canaan flowing with milk and honey. In the Epistle, the situation of the ancient Israelites is likened to that of “believers in Christ”, who are to enter ‘salvation-rest’ by faith. The theme of “Hebrews” is absolute superiority of Jesus Christ. The prologue of the Epistle quoted at the beginning presents Christ as God’s final revelation, ***‘his Son,’*** distinct from any other Old Testament prophets and it identifies Him with deity to be worth being worshipped and also with the messianic and Davidic king, by applying the wording used for Yahweh in the Hebrew Scriptures to Christ.

In chapter one, the apostle focuses on the superiority of the Son, Jesus Christ to the angels. The first Hebrew Scripture quoted here in the Epistle is from **Psalm 2:7: ‘You are my Son; today I have become your father.’** This prophecy was fulfilled by Christ’s incarnation, exactly as heralded by the angel Gabriel to a virgin Mary who was pledged to get married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of the king David: ***‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will called the Son of God. ...For nothing is impossible with God.’*** (Lk.1:35-37). This promise of a Jewish Messiah was not new at the first century among the Jews at all and even in the days of David it was already an affirmed prophecy ever since promised to Abraham: ***‘when your days are over and you (the king David) rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will***

come from your own body, and I will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. ...' (2 Sa.7:12-14. Line added).

The last verse above is the second quotation from The Hebrew Bible in “Hebrews” chapter One. The Davidic offspring, greater than Solomon was addressed in this prophetic promise. Therefore, Jews long awaited the fulfilment of these prophecies handed down from generation to generation and its fulfilment was actually announced by the angel Gabriel two thousand years ago. If the nation of Israel had been willing to accept it through the Word of God that they inherited and Jesus’ ministry on earth at that turning point, then, human history would have developed completely differently. Regrettably, however, *‘He (Christ, Jewish Messiah) was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.’* (Jn.1:10-11).

The next, and third quotation is from **Psalm 97:7**: *‘Let all God’s angels worship him.’* This statement will completely be brought into fulfilment *‘when God brings his firstborn into the world’* (Line added), i.e., in the day of the Lord’s glorious Second Coming. Paul, in both his Epistles to the Philippians and Romans, referring to the resurrected Christ, stated: *‘Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him at the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father’* (Phi.2:9-11). On that day, ultimately all will acknowledge Him as Lord, i.e., the Supreme Being who should be worshipped and served, in sharp contrast to angels, mere created beings, to which the fourth quotation from Psalm 104:4 refers as being just agents of God’s purposes: *‘he makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire.’*

The fifth quotation is taken from Psalm 45:6-7. Here the Son is explicitly called *‘God’* who *‘will last for ever and ever’* and whose *‘righteousness will be the sceptre of (His) kingdom.’* The sixth quotation is taken from Psalm 102:25-27. Significantly enough, the apostle applies the passage addressed to Yahweh in Psalm to the Son here as the One who *‘laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens’* in the beginning. This application providentially casts a light on the passage of Psalm 102. According to the apostle’s interpretation, the quoted verses were addressed to the Son only after His perseverance and lament before the LORD and as response of the Father to the obedient Son. In another passage in “Hebrews”, as the apostle explained: *‘During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek’* (5:7-10), the Son’s exaltation by the Father was the result of His once and for all accomplishment of the Father’s will. In fact, the preceding two verses of the concerned quotation in Psalm 102 indicate the Son’s plea: *‘In the course of my life he broke my strength; he cut short my days. So I said: “Do not take me away. O my God, in the midst of my days; your years go on through all generations.’* (102:23-24) and the Father answered the obedient Son from the following verses onwards in Psalm 102.

The final, seventh quotation in “Hebrews” is taken from Psalm 110:1, which the apostle repeatedly used as the application to Christ in the same Epistle: *‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’* Not only in “Hebrews” but also there are many New Testament references to this passage. Jesus Himself quoted this Psalm and purposefully cast a question about His identity; who on earth was Christ, the Son of David?: *David himself declares in the Book of Psalms: “ ‘The Lord said to me Lord: ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son? (Lk.20:42-44).* Jesus reminded the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who overestimated their traditional and professional understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures, of its correct interpretation that Christ was far more than *‘the Son of David,’* a mere descendant of the king David, that He was far superior to David, i.e., David’s Lord. Unless Jesus’ opponents had admitted that Christ, their Messiah was the divine Son of God, they could not have understood that passage. In reality, Christ, now crowned with glory and honour, sits on the throne of the eternal God at the right hand of the Most High in the heavenly realms.

Having emphasised the most important theme concerning Christ and His superiority in Hebrews 1, in ch.2 the apostle moves on to the passages of five warnings against those Jewish believers whose faith had

begun wavering. He points out that there is nowhere else to go from Christ having once been enlightened. The first warning was a danger of disregarding such a great salvation, which ***‘was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to (them) by those who heard him,’*** and to which God also testified ***‘by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the holy Spirit distributed according to his will’*** (He.2:3-4). If violation of the law led to punishment, disregard for the gospel brought by Christ would lead to even greater punishment. After the first warning, the apostle, knowing Jew’s misdirected adoration for angels, continues to explore the superiority of Christ to angels in the rest of Hebrews 2.