

Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews

Chapter 2: The Purpose of the Incarnation of the Son

(also available on-line at ichthys.com)

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I. Introduction

In the previous chapter, Paul demonstrated definitively Jesus Christ's superiority to the angels by proving His deity beyond any doubt. In contrast to previous modes of communicating the truth (Heb.1:1), Jesus is the Word of God Himself (Heb.1:2a), the Creator of the world (Heb.1:2b; 1:10-12), the Sustainer of all that is (Heb.1:3), the very Son of God Himself (Heb.1:2), the exact image of the Father who through His victory at the cross (Heb.1:3b) won for Himself that Name which ranks above every other name (Heb.1:4), with the result that the angels, created beings, are commanded by the Father to "worship Him!" (Heb.1:6); for while they are all ministers of God for the sake of the salvation of mankind (Heb.1:14; cf. Heb.1:7), the Son is the One who won that salvation for us (Heb.1:3b). Jesus is the coming King (Heb.1:8-9) whom the Father has installed at the place of ultimate honor on high at His right hand to await that glorious future moment when Jesus Christ will be revealed as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and all of His enemies will be made the footstool of His feet (Heb.1:13).

Having thus established our Lord's deity and His concomitant superiority to the angels, Paul now turns to an explanation of the need for our Lord to become a human being to rescue us from our sins. For while this teaching is one with which any Christian should be conversant, the Jerusalem believers had allowed it to slip from their hearts – so that they were in danger themselves of slipping away from their faith in Him. And only believers are saved (Jn.3:18). Hence the need for Paul to spell out as if he were addressing newly minted Christians this necessity for Jesus to become a human being, explaining also our own role in the plan of God and reminding his readers of just what it is that the Messiah did for us during His first advent by redeeming us through His spiritual death on the cross. Failure to remember these essential matters is fraught with spiritual danger (Heb.2:1-4); believing human beings, not the angels, are the heirs to the eternal kingdom on which we have set our hope (Heb.2:5-8), with the Messiah being the ultimate Heir in whom we all have our inheritance; and that is why our Lord had to become a human being: there was no other way for us to be saved and thus to come into that marvelous inheritance the Father has for all who have put their faith in His beloved Son (Heb.2:9-18).

Chapter two also introduces the important principle taught and expounded and expanded throughout the book of Hebrews of the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ (Heb.2:17): this new priesthood is the basis for the New Covenant which replaced the Law. For our Lord to make the perfect sacrifice and be our High Priest, He had to become a genuine human being in order to die for our sins. Chapter two thus lays the ground work for explaining the fulfilment and replacement of the Law with its shadows through the reality of the Savior, the Messiah, having

come into the world to accomplish salvation once and for all – for all who are willing to put their faith in Him.

II. Translation

(1) For this reason, it is all the more necessary for us to pay attention to the [teachings] we have heard, lest we drift away [off course]. (2) For if the Word spoken through angels (i.e., the Law) became valid, and every transgression and violation received a just recompense, (3a) how shall we escape if we shall have forsaken such a great salvation [from the Word of Life Himself]? (3b) . . . Which [salvation], having received its initial expression from the Lord by those who had heard [Him personally] (i.e., the previous generation in the early days of the Church, ca. mid to late 30's A.D.) has now been confirmed to us [in our day] (i.e., the present day generation of the Church, ca. mid to late 50's A.D.), (4) through God [the Father Himself] bearing witness to it through signs and wonders and various [other] demonstrations of His power, and with distributions of the Holy Spirit (i.e., spiritual gifts) according to His will. (5) For it is not to angels that He subordinated the world to come, (6) but someone testifies at some point saying, "What is Man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you care for him? (7) You made him a little lower than the angels, you crowned him with glory and honor. You made him sovereign over all the works of your hands, (8a) you put everything under his feet" (Ps.8:4-6). For in subordinating the world to Him, He left nothing that was not subordinate to Him. However, we do not now yet see the world in subordination to Him. (9) But we do now see Jesus crowned with glory and honor on account of the death He suffered, even Him who became "a little lower than the angels" [for a brief span] so that by the grace of God He might taste death on behalf of us all. (10) For it was fitting for [the Father] to make complete through sufferings Him on whose account all things exist and through whom all things exist, namely, the Captain of their salvation, even Him who has led many sons to glory, [our Lord Jesus Christ]. (11) For both the One who sanctifies and those who are sanctified belong to One [Father], and for this reason [Christ] is not ashamed to call them His brothers, (12) as He says: "I will proclaim Your name to My brothers. In the midst of the assembly I shall praise you" (Ps.22:22). (13) and elsewhere, "I [too] shall put My confidence in Him, [the Father]" (Is.8:17). and elsewhere, "Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me" (Is.8:18). (14) Therefore since "these children" (i.e., believers given to Christ by the Father: v.13) are flesh and blood, [Christ] took on the same [flesh and blood] in a very similar fashion (i.e., not identical only in that He was virgin born and so without sin), in order that through His death He might put an end to the one possessing the power of death, that is, the devil, (15) and might reconcile [to God] those who were subject to being slaves their whole lives long by their fear of death. (16) For it is certainly not angels He is helping, but He is helping the seed of Abraham (i.e., believing humanity). (17) For this reason, it was essential for Him to be like His brothers in every respect, in order for Him to be a merciful and faithful priest (i.e., go-between trusted by both sides) in matters concerning God so that He could expiate (i.e., "cover" them symbolically as if with His blood so as to propitiate God's justice) the sins of the people. (18) For because He has suffered, He is able to help those who are being tested, since He Himself was [also] put to the test.

III. Summary and Paraphrase

For us to be saved, Jesus Christ had to become a human being in order to accomplish actual atonement for our sins – as opposed to the animal sacrifices of the Law which are merely symbolic.

Given the importance of what has just been said, the absolute proof of Christ's deity and His superiority also in His humanity to angels in every way, it is critical that you repent of your dabbling with these dangerous ideas and that you repent of your turning back to the symbols of the Law which He has now fulfilled so as not to fall away from Christ entirely into apostasy. In regard to the latter, remember that even the Law was given through angels who were serving as intermediaries – the very angels to whom Christ is infinitely superior. Even in the case of that Law of shadows, all violations were severely punished. How is rejecting Christ Himself now clearly revealed as the Savior not immeasurably worse? How can anyone hope to escape God's judgment if the actual salvation of the Son of God be neglected? The good news about this salvation was first proclaimed by Jesus Himself and has now been confirmed in our day, with the Father Himself bearing witness to it through signs and wonders and various demonstrations of His power, and with distributions of the gifts of the Holy Spirit – all blessings direct from God and not mediated by angels as was the case with the Law.

And it is not angels who will share Christ's rulership in His millennial kingdom but us, just as scripture affirms when it says that God subordinated the world to us, not to angels (Ps.8:5-7). This subjection of the world to Man has not yet taken place in its entirety, clearly: Jesus Christ had to come into the world as One made temporarily less powerful than the angels in order for Him to suffer death to save us all, and on account of that victory on the cross we see Him now crowned with glory and honor far above any angelic being. For us to be saved, it was necessary for the Father to complete through suffering, that is, fulfill the plan of God through the cross, the One for whom and on account of whom all things exist, our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who has brought the rest of us, sons of God through Him, unto salvation, for He is the One who has "pioneered" that salvation for us. For both we and our Savior, the One who by His blood has bought us and made us holy and we who are made holy by Him belong to one and the same heavenly Father. Thus our Savior is pleased to call us His brothers as scripture prophesied, telling us of His love for us as His Bride (Ps.22:22), relating our trust in Him as those who now belong to Him (Is.8:17), and describing us as being one together forever (Is.8:18).

Since we are human beings, Jesus had to become a human being also in order to pay the price of redemption for us, bearing our sins in His human body, if we were going to be saved. It is through that spiritual death on our behalf that Satan's power over us – the power inherent in the fear of physical death we all would otherwise have to face without hope – that we have been saved and liberated from that fear that previously led us to serving the devil, in effect, in whatever false systems of false hope to which we had been enslaved. Was it angels that Christ delivered in this way? No, it was us, and in order to be our High Priest, the merciful and faithful One who would sacrifice Himself for our sake, Jesus, being God from all eternity, had to become

like us, a true human being, in order to be our perfect sacrifice for sin – not a mere ritual symbol, but the One who actually expiated our sins by His blood, His spiritual death in the darkness on our behalf. He was severely tested before His spiritual death and suffered unimaginably in dying for all of our sins. He is therefore able to be our ultimate Helper in bestowing on us the salvation purchased with His blood, His spiritual death, and He is also able to aid us in every way now that we are saved, for He knows from bitter experience what human suffering is like (so that He is our perfect Intercessor as well: Rom.8:34; 1Jn.2:1-2).

IV. Verse by Verse Commentary

Verse One through Three (part one)

(1) For this reason, it is all the more necessary for us to pay attention to the [teachings] we have heard, lest we drift away [off course]. (2) For if the Word spoken through angels (i.e., the Law) became valid, and every transgression and violation received a just recompense, (3a) how shall we escape if we shall have forsaken such a great salvation [from the Word of Life Himself]?
Hebrews 2:1-3a

For This Reason: The "reason" for the need to start paying attention is the situation implied by what Paul had written them in chapter one. No Christian church should need to have it explained to them that Jesus Christ is God, the Creator of all things, the Sustainer of the universe, the very Son of God Himself, having had that title validated by His victory on the cross where He paid for the sins of the world – and that therefore He is superior to angels in every way. And certainly not *the* original church of all Christendom, the church of the apostles where the Spirit was first given to all the believers there in a unique and miraculous way.

But that was nearly three decades earlier by the time this letter reached Jerusalem and a lot had apparently changed. Many of that first generation of Spirit-filled believers had moved on, scattered by the persecution led by Saul (Acts 8:1-4); others had no doubt passed on, gone to be with the Lord; and others, new arrivals, some no doubt of questionable depth of faith, had been attracted to Jerusalem for all manner of reasons that had nothing necessarily to do with genuine spiritual growth: God was providing apostolic teaching and special gifts of the Spirit to enable unprecedented growth in churches all around the eastern Mediterranean so that pilgrimage to Jerusalem was unnecessary if growth were the true desire. But since Jerusalem was the original hub, it held a certain natural attraction – and not just for believers operating more on their emotions than in the Spirit: this was also the most logical place for false teaching to set up shop, namely, at what was at that time the center of the Christian world.

The combination of the negative influences these new arrivals brought (Gnosticism), in conjunction with the pull of the old, namely, a desire to return to traditional modes of worship now that the age of the apostles was drawing to a close and now that the "fireworks" of the miraculous doings of earlier days were no longer much remembered, had merged to produce a noticeable downward, backward drift in the spiritual life of the Jerusalem church in aggregate. Even if there were still some strong believers holding firm in faith (as no doubt must have been

true), even if there were still some elders who had not compromised along with the few remaining apostles as well, nevertheless, the negative trend in that church had become obvious – and had gotten to the point where the Spirit found it necessary to intervene by commissioning Paul to write this very sharp letter.

Pay Attention or Drift Away: For those believers in Jerusalem who were still intent on hanging onto Jesus Christ, this was the choice: pay attention now or drift away – just as believers today face a very similar choice being confronted with very similar pressures and temptations in our age of Laodicea. Prior to the receipt of Paul's letter, the necessity of making that choice had not been made as obvious as Paul now makes it (or at least many in this congregation had blinded their own eyes to it), focusing in here on the problem of spiritual decline with laser-like focus.

These Jerusalem believers now stood at a crossroads. They had been drifting backwards for a long time, in their spiritual regression being "swept off-course and carried headlong by every breeze of so-called teaching that emanates from the trickery of men in their readiness to do anything to cunningly work their deceit" (Eph.4:14). Paul's letter stripped away any excuse for their behavior based upon ignorance. After listening to Hebrews, further progress, actually, regression, down the road to apostasy would be entirely self-willed and without excuse.

Whether dabbling with the demonic influences of Gnosticism or allowing themselves to be swept back into the hardened, rule-based misapplication of the Law their unbelieving contemporaries were practicing at the temple, the way forward now was clear: to recommit to spiritual growth while casting away all false beliefs and spiritual compromises. It is to just such a spiritual revival through remembrance of the essential truths of the Word of God that Paul is summoning them. Nothing could have been more important then – and the same is true today. Because the way backward was and is also very clear: failing to grow leads to spiritual vulnerability and in all too many cases thereafter either to apostasy (the death of faith) or to the sin unto death (an ignominious removal from this life by the Lord). Failing to respond to the clarion call embodied in the book of Hebrews meant that the best a believer of that day could hope for was some sort of tenuous inertia in the middle between lack of growth and precipitous decline. The devil's system and methods being what they are, staying put is nearly impossible in the Christian life under the best of circumstances. When the pressure is on – as it was in Jerusalem at this time and as it will be in our time once the Tribulation begins – growth or regression are the only two realistic alternatives. It is very difficult to stand still in the Christian life.

The Word Spoken through Angels: By "the word" here Paul is referring to the Law of Moses. Bible readers will remember, of course, that Moses spoke directly with the Lord on Mt. Sinai and on other occasions as well (e.g., Ex.3:4-9; 34:32 and *passim* in Exodus).

So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.
Exodus 33:11a NKJV

Indeed, Moses' face glowed with His glory after their conversations and Moses placed a veil over his face so that the fading out of it would not be visible (Ex.34:33-35; 2Cor.3:13-18). But the book of Exodus never mentions "angels". What then is meant by "angels" in our context?

"[You] who have received the law by the direction *of angels* and have not kept it."
Acts 7:53 NKJV

What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed *through angels* by the hand of a mediator.
Galatians 3:19 NKJV

In Hebrew, the word for angel is *malach*, and is used of human messengers as well as angelic ones (e.g., Gen.32:3); and in Greek, *angelos*, from which our English word "angel" is derived, the word means "messenger" exclusively in secular Greek and is the word used to translate *malach* in the Septuagint or LXX (i.e., the 3rd cent. B.C. Greek version of the Old Testament). In both passages above as well as in our context of Hebrews 2:2, "angels" does *not* refer to multiple beings meeting with Moses at one time. This is never said by scripture to have occurred. Indeed, in every appearance of God to Moses recorded in scripture there was only *one* Messenger: the Angel of the Lord.

(2) And *the Angel of the Lord* appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. (3) Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn." (4) So when *the Lord* saw that he turned aside to look, *God* called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."
Exodus 3:2-4 NKJV

As this passage demonstrates clearly (and as we have affirmed many times before), "the Angel of the Lord" is what is traditionally called a "Christophany", that is, a pre-incarnate appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹ So the "angels" of Acts 7:53, Galatians 3:19 and Hebrews 2:2 are in fact appearances of our Lord to Moses as the visible Person of the Trinity, pluralized in all three passages because they were repeated often in the process of the exodus and the giving of the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, the Law of Moses.

Phrasing things in this way is thus a not so subtle reminder from Paul to his readers not only of the superiority of the Son incarnate and His New Covenant to the Law which was given before our Lord became a human being, before He died for our sins, was resurrected, ascended, and glorified at the Father's right hand; but it also should have reminded them of just who it was standing behind those appearances and speaking with Moses, the mediator, in giving the Law: none other than our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the very One whose cross these believers were denigrating, the very One whose glorious Person these believers were treating as inferior to the angels He created.

Escape if we shall have Forsaken: Paul uses here what in rhetoric is called an *a*

¹ See in particular BB 1: Theology, section II.C.3, "Appearances of Christ in the Old Testament"; BB 4A: Christology, section I.5.b, "Old Testament Appearances of Jesus Christ"; and in Exodus 14: Hardening Pharaoh's Heart: Verses 19-21, under "The Angel of the Lord".

fortiori argument to bring home to his readers the extremely dangerous nature of their backsliding. Having established the incomparable superiority of the Son over the angels, how do they imagine, he asks, that they will be able to avoid disaster if they reject the Son, the One who is *the* Messenger through whom the Father is now communicating directly to us (Heb.1:1-2), since even the indirect message of the Law, which was communicated via inferior "angels", required and received terrifying punishments upon all violations of it?

Anyone familiar with the Pentateuch would (will) be able to supply numerous examples of the penalties above, such as the stoning of the man caught gathering sticks on the Sabbath day (Num.15:32-36), the stoning of the man who blasphemed (Lev.24:10-16), the numerous provisions in the Law for just such punishments upon all manner of violations of the Law (e.g., Deut.13:1-13). Overlooking/forsaking important provisions of the Law, sinning "with a high hand" (Num.15:30), brought serious retribution. If that were the case for the shadow teachings which merely looked forward to the coming of the Messiah who would actually pay for our sins (in contrast to their symbolic cleansing under the Law), overlooking/forsaking the actual Savior Himself was clearly exponentially worse to an unknowable degree. Yet that was where this church found itself at present, and with this simple argument Paul forces them to confront the truth of their functional apostasy straight on: were they to be held to the standard of the Law, they would be worthy of immediate stoning for denigrating the blood of Christ. How sadly ironic that they were committing this offense against Christ by reverting to the present perversion by unbelievers of that very Law which in fact spoke of Him (Jn.5:39-40).

The Law is good, if used correctly (1Tim.1:8). And if the Law could bring salvation, it would have been sufficient to follow it (or try to) as these believers were doing (Gal.3:21). But no one can be justified by following the Law (Gal.2:16), in great part because no one can completely do so since we are all sinners (Rom.7:9-23). For that reason we needed a Savior who would fulfill the righteous requirements of the Law (Rom.8:1-4). Overlooking/forsaking Him in preference for a Law which cannot save was the poorest possible bargain any quondam believer could possibly make – and for those receiving this letter whose faith had not yet died out, the question Paul poses – "how do you think you will escape?" – is designed to cut to the quick and bring about godly repentance and reform.

(8) Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it – I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while – (9) yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. (10) Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

2nd Corinthians 7:8-10 NIV

In verse one of our chapter, Paul had characterized the spiritual decline of this church as "drifting away". Here in verse three he describes their negligent attitude to the truth and to Jesus Christ as "forsaking" the salvation which was once so dear to them. The process of reverting to the status of an unbeliever may start slowly, but if unchecked always seems to pick up momentum quickly – negative momentum – as drifting leads to wilful and more rapid regression. The devil is very

good at encouraging believers to stop advancing through all manner of opposition which he is allowed to deploy to test our resolve. When momentum is stopped, the drift inevitably begins. At that point, the evil one has an entire world system of attractions designed to ensnare the whole human race. Believers who have forgotten their role in this conflict and thus begun to move away from the strait and narrow toward the broad path that leads to destruction are prime targets for such ensnarement. It is difficult to stand still in the Christian life. If we are not moving forward, we will eventually begin heading backward – and the end result of that process is either the sin unto death (i.e., in the case of those giving a particularly bad witness while still believing, a punitive removal from this life; e.g., 1Jn.5:16; cf. 1Cor.5:4-5; 11:29-30; 1Tim.1:20) or apostasy (i.e., loss of faith):²

And he who was sown on the rocky places, this is the one who hears the Word and immediately receives it with joy. He has no roots [to his faith], however, but lasts only a short time. So when tribulation or persecution occurs on account of the Word, he is immediately tripped up.
Matthew 13:20-21

And these [second types] who are sown on the rocky places are similar. Whenever they hear the Word they immediately receive it with joy, although they have no root [of faith] in themselves, but are only temporary [believers]. When tribulation or persecution because of the Word comes [their way], they are immediately tripped up.
Mark 4:16-17

And those [whose seed of faith fell] on the rock do receive the Word with joy when they hear it. However these [types] have no root [to their faith]. They believe for a while, but in time of testing *they apostatize*.
Luke 8:13

The testing/temptation these believers were receiving from Gnostic sources is analogous to the worldly temptations believers are receiving in our time; the tribulation and persecution they were receiving in the form of pressure to accommodate to legalism is analogous to the pressures believers today feel to accommodate to the various lukewarm iterations of the church-visible. In the soon-to-come Tribulation, the level of temptation and persecution will be exponentially greater than anything previously seen.

(4) For, in the case of those who have been enlightened (i.e., have become believers, "light in the Lord": Eph.5:8), and who have experienced the heavenly gift and become partakers of the Holy Spirit (i.e., have been baptized with the Spirit so that He indwells them, and by the Spirit into union with Christ), (5) and who have experienced that the Word of God is good, and [who have experienced] miracles [foreshadowing] the age to come, (6) it is impossible to restore them to [true] repentance after having fallen [into sin]

² See Part 3B: Hamartiology, the Study of Sin, section IV.7, "Apostasy and the Sin unto Death".

as long as they keep crucifying the Son of God afresh and exposing Him to open shame (i.e., while they continue in their sin, the particular sin in question here being continued participation in the sacrificial rites of Law which foreshadowed Christ's work on the cross and suggesting by that participation that His work was ineffective).

Hebrews 6:4-6

(26) For if we *willfully continue* in the life of sin after accepting and recognizing the truth [of the gospel], there remains no further sacrifice we can make for our sins, (27) but only a terrible expectation of judgment, and a burning fire, ready to devour those who oppose [His will].

Hebrews 10:26-27

In spite of the dire warnings Paul gives this congregation above and in our context, we should not lose sight of the fact that he is doing so *not* because reform, repentance and restoration is impossible (as many who misread these passages often falsely conclude), but *precisely so that* these believers might turn back to the Lord with all their hearts and not lose what they had worked so hard for in years past (Heb.10:32-36).

(9) Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case – the things that have to do with salvation. (10) God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.

Hebrews 6:9-10 NIV

Recognizing the reality of one's situation is always the first step in a spiritual recovery, and that recognition is what Paul is attempting to bring about in the case of this church he dearly loved. Just as one must first recognize and admit the truth to oneself when one has fallen into personal sin before any recovery is possible, so it is in respect to the overall course of one's spiritual life as well: in order to turn the ship around and put it back on course, the course, that is, which leads us ever closer to Him, there must first be an acknowledgment that the present course is wrong (i.e., failure to make the Word of God a priority and giving one's attention to false objects – Gnosticism and legalism – instead) and has only resulted in a general drifting away from the Lord, the very opposite of what will makes our salvation secure.

For we have all become partners of Christ, *if we hold fast* to our original conviction firmly to the end.

Hebrews 3:14

Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position.

2nd Peter 3:17 NIV

Look to yourselves, that you may not lose what you have worked for, but may win a full reward.

2nd John 1:8 RSV

So Great Salvation:

(1) Then I saw in the right hand of the One sitting on the throne a scroll, with writing on its front and on its back, sealed with seven seals. (2) And I saw a powerful angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to undo its seals?" (3) And no one in heaven, nor on the earth was able to open the scroll or to look inside of it. (4) And I began to cry much, because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look inside of it. (5) And one of the elders was saying to me, "Don't cry! Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, He has won the victory [so as to be worthy] to open the scroll and to undo its seals."

Revelation 5:1-5

If no one were found worthy to bring a godly end to the world we live in, if there were no life after death, no resurrection, no final termination to the troubles and vanities of this world, we all might very well "weep much", for in that case we believers would indeed be "of all people most to be pitied" (1Cor.15:19). But, praise God, it is not so! We have been saved by the blood of the Lamb, redeemed from our sins, and promised a sure and certain resurrection from the dead! Yes this salvation we possess by grace through faith in Jesus Christ is indeed "so great" – nothing in this world is greater or ever could be. Putting it in jeopardy in any way and for any reason, therefore, is the height of folly. No pressure, no temptation, no cost, no threat of death or disgrace or prison is in any way whatsoever worthy of consideration in place of the life eternal we have in Jesus Christ and all the future glories pertaining to it.

For I do not consider these present hardships in any way comparable to the glory destined to be revealed for us.

Romans 8:18

(17) For this present light affliction of ours is working out for us an eternal weight of glory beyond any possible estimation. (18) [Let us] not [then be] having [any] regard for what can be seen, but [instead] for what cannot be seen. For the things which can be seen are ephemeral. But the things which cannot be seen are eternal.

2nd Corinthians 4:17-18

There is a saying, "life is short – and then you die". What unbelievers find ironically humorous – but viscerally ignore instead of taking that truth to heart – we believers understand completely: without Jesus Christ, without the so great salvation we have in Him, without the blessed hope of the resurrection and life eternal as part of His Bride, life really *is* meaningless.

"Utter futility! Utter futility!" says the teacher, "Everything is futility!"

Ecclesiastes 1:2

From the perspective of the unbeliever with eyes in his head, Solomon's synopsis of human life is absolutely accurate. This life only has any true purpose for believers – because only believers have hope beyond the fast-approaching grave. For the unbeliever, all hope perishes with them. How utterly pointless is a life without Jesus Christ! How utterly insane then for any believer to

even dabble with any teaching or movement or group of individuals which leads away from the Lord who bought us at the highest possible cost. The end result of all such drifting if left unchecked is the loss of the "so great salvation" that should mean more to us than this short physical life itself.

(10) And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, "Now our God's deliverance and might and kingdom have come, even the power of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, the one who accuses them day and night in front of our God, has been thrown down. (11) But these [believers] have defeated [the devil] through the blood of the Lamb and the Word of their testimony. For they did not love their lives, [even] to the point of death." Revelation 12:10-12

Whatever excuse believers of prior generations may have had, the Jerusalem believers of Paul's day had seen the Messiah with their own eyes – or had received the testimony of those who had. If they had not seen the outpouring of the Holy Spirit personally, they were certainly partakers of His blessed indwelling ministry as we all are. They possessed not only the Old Testament scriptures, whose shadow-teachings pointing to the Messiah had now been made crystal clear, but were now also in possession of large parts of the New Testament scriptures as well, which scriptures had been and were being taught and explained by apostles and prophets and teachers throughout their church – or certainly should have been. Of all groups of believers on earth at that time, this church had benefitted from the blessing of the New Covenant as none other. But what should have been a cause of continually rejoicing was being neglected – in preference to turning back to the old by many and to a demonic substitute by some. Such behavior under the Old Covenant required pitiless cutting out of what was rotten. How much more deserving of stern correction were those who were by their actions close to denying the Son, the Father's message and Messenger, the One so far superior to "the angels of the Law" (as Paul's contemporaries misunderstood things) and of Gnostic contrivance, the One who had bought them free from their sins, even denying His work on the cross in doing so?

It is through this gospel that you are being saved, ***if you hold firmly*** to the word I preached to you – otherwise you have believed in vain.
1st Corinthians 15:2

(11) Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with Him, we will also live with Him; (12) ***If we persevere***, we will also reign with Him. If we disown Him, He will also disown us; (13) If we are faithless, He will remain faithful, for He cannot disown Himself.
2nd Timothy 2:11-13

We are of [Christ's] household, ***if we hold fast*** to our courage and confidence in this hope.
Hebrews 3:6

For we have all become partners of Christ, ***if we hold fast*** to our original conviction firmly to the end.
Hebrews 3:14

In the Bible, there are three aspects of salvation: we are saved when we believe; we are being saved as we persevere in faith in this life; and we shall be ultimately saved when the Lord returns or takes us back to be with Him. Thus, it is correct to say that a believer "has been saved" (e.g., Rom.8:24; Eph.2:8; 2Tim.1:9), "is being saved" (e.g., Lk.13:22; 1Cor.1:18; 15:2; 2Cor.2:15), and "will be saved" (e.g., Matt.10:22; 24:13; Rom.5:9-10; 1Cor.3:15; 1Pet.1:5; 1:8-9; 2:2; Heb.9:28).

(3) Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, (5) who through faith are shielded by God's power *until the coming of the salvation* that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

1st Peter 1:3-5 NIV

But this coming salvation is for believers only, that is, only those who believe in Jesus Christ until the end, for *only* believers are saved.

"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

John 3:18 NKJV

Salvation does not fall to the lot of those who come to deem themselves unworthy of life eternal by rejecting in this life the Savior they once held dear. This is the danger that hung over the heads of the Jerusalem church on account of their drifting, backsliding and in some cases accelerating spiritual regression.

(20) For if after having escaped the defilements of this world by recognizing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ [these weak believers] should be overcome [spiritually] by becoming involved again in these foul things, then they have become worse off than they were before. (21) For it would have been better for them not to have accepted the Righteous Way in the first place, rather than – once having accepted this holy command [for faith in Christ which was] committed to them – to turn their backs on it now. (22) And so in their case this proverb is true: "The dog has returned to his vomit, and the sow, though washed, to her muddy sty".

2nd Peter 2:20-22

Verse Three (part two) through Four

(3b) . . . Which [salvation], having received its initial expression from the Lord by those who had heard [Him personally] (i.e., the previous generation in the early days of the Church, ca. mid to late 30's A.D.) has now been confirmed to us [in our day] (i.e., the present day generation of the Church, ca. mid to late 50's A.D.), (4) through God [the Father Himself] bearing witness to it through signs and wonders and various [other] demonstrations of His power, and with distributions of the Holy Spirit (i.e., spiritual gifts)

according to His will.³
Hebrews 2:3b-4

A brief consideration of the translation above is necessary. Most versions completely misunderstand and thus dangerously mistranslate the passage above. For example:

. . . which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him.
Hebrews 2:3b NKJV

But proper rearrangement according to the actual Greek word order produces the following:

. . . which at the first began to be spoken by [from/through] the Lord . . . by those who heard Him . . . and was confirmed to us . . . [by God's miraculous witness in establishing Paul's authority among others (v.4)].
Hebrews 2:3b NKJV

In fact, therefore, the Greek text makes no division between our Lord's speaking and the apostles' hearing Him: it is their witnessing to His words that happens "first". This is of critical importance because we are not dealing with mere tradition here: the teaching of salvation is mediated by Christ Himself (just as He will be described as the Mediator in Heb.8:6; 9:15; 12:24), not by angels or apostles. Secondly, the message of salvation has been confirmed "in our day", *not* only by these other apostles but by the miracles given by God which established the authority of Paul as well as of those other apostles. According to the Greek, Jesus Christ is the speaker; the older generation of apostles are the hearers who spread the message of salvation received directly from Him, not from tradition; and the "confirmation" of the gospel is *not* accomplished "by those who heard" but by the miracles which God used to confirm it "in our day" in no small part at Paul's hands (e.g., Acts 13:10-12; 14:8-10; 16:18; 16:25-26; 19:11-13; 20:9-12; 1Cor.2:4; 2Cor.12:12; cf., Rom.15:18-19).

Which Salvation: Everything discussed so far about salvation in the prior verses should not have been "news" to the believers in the Jerusalem church. Far from it. The Son is the Word, the message and Messenger of the Father – and He came to Israel, walking the very streets these believers were walking and teaching in the very temple courts wherein they were now still dallying – as if He had not come and died for their sins. If that were not enough, the first Pentecost of the Church Age wherein the Spirit was miraculously poured out upon the assembled believers took place in Jerusalem as well, and the apostles commissioned by our Lord, and specially gifted and empowered by the Spirit, were the original teachers of this "so great salvation", this "good news", this "gospel".

The truth had not been hidden away in some inner room. It had been proclaimed by that first generation, witnessed to through many miracles and wonders, imbued with the blood of the first

³ For notes on the translation, see Hebrews: Introduction, section I.4, "The Hebrews 2:3 Objection".

martyrs, and had by this time already spread half way around the Roman world, with reports about the coming to faith of the gentiles being regularly received at Jerusalem for several decades by this time. That word of faith, that gospel, that message of salvation, had also by this point been committed to writing with well over half of the New Testament already circulating among the churches throughout the Mediterranean world – and it would be incomprehensible to suppose that the original "mother church" would not have had copies of every inspired writing available. It would seem that the individual believers in this church who were indeed willfully neglecting the Son of God and the "so great salvation" provided by His blood (in preference to tradition and fantasies) were more without excuse for this failure than possibly any other group of believers before or since.

(10) Even as they *foretold this salvation* that was to come to you, the prophets of old diligently investigated and inquired about this [gift] of grace, (11) being eager to discover the precise time the Spirit of Christ within them was signifying as He *predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories* [of salvation, among other things] that would follow [the cross]. (12) For it was revealed to them that in prophesying these things, they were not so much serving themselves as they were you – and these same things have now been proclaimed to you *through those who gave you the gospel* through the Holy Spirit, sent from heaven – even angels want to look into these things.

1st Peter 1:10-12

We have already seen how that in the passage above Peter describes those early days from a third person perspective, even though, clearly, he was one of the ones who "gave you the gospel"; therefore there is no basis for rejecting Paul as the author of Hebrews on account of his similar statement in our context (i.e., "having received its initial expression through the Lord by those who had heard").⁴ As Peter affirmed above, this "so great salvation" was prophesied in the Old Testament as well, known to believers before as well as after the cross, merely being cloaked in shadows before the Son came into the world and actually died for our sins. Now that He had done so, these Jerusalem believers found themselves doubly convicted of spiritual malfeasance for failing to hold fast to the essential truths of salvation uniquely unveiled, demonstrated, displayed and taught to them by way of special privilege. The special revelation by the apostles of the truth about the "so great salvation" which we believers should all treasure above everything else came *first* to the believers in Jerusalem, and only afterwards to the rest of Israel and to the gentiles.

(46) He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, (47) and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem.*"

Luke 24:46-47 NIV

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses *in Jerusalem*, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

⁴ And in Paul's case, he was not, or course, one of the original evangelists but initially an opponent of the truth. See Hebrews: Introduction, section I.4, "The Hebrews 2:3 Objection".

Acts 1:8 NIV

Furthermore, the Father vouched for the truth of the apostles' words by means of "signs and wonders and various [other] demonstrations of His power, and with distributions of the Holy Spirit", and the book of Acts is replete with just such things.

(37) "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; (38) "but if I do, though you do not believe Me, **believe the works**, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him."

John 10:37-38 NKJV

One would hope that upon hearing Paul's reminder, individual believers in Jerusalem could and would recall many such things they had seen personally or heard of second hand from older Christians, and thus be reminded to rekindle their faith at least through these helps, the very purpose of such miracles being to support weak faith. For it seems that forgetfulness was at the heart of the Jerusalem church's spiritual drifting – a not uncommon phenomenon.

(1) You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. (2) I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard? (3) Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?

Galatians 3:1-3 NIV

Before we agree too vociferously with Paul about the motes in the eyes of the Galatian and Jerusalem believers, we ought to consider the planks in the eyes of the vast majority of believers in the church-visible today. If we, personally, are exceptions, all glory be to God. But as Paul also said in a similar context, "Do not be arrogant, but tremble. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you either" (Rom.11:20b-21 NIV). We stand by faith (Rom.11:20a; 2Cor.1:24) . . . just as long as we hold onto that faith.

(11) All these things happened to them as an example to us, and were written to warn us – ***we who live at the culmination of the ages***. (12) So let him who thinks he stands firm beware lest he fall.

1st Corinthians 10:11-12

For these Jewish believers of the first century, time was running out. Barely a decade remained before Jerusalem would be surrounded and eventually destroyed by Roman legions. But how is that situation much different, spiritually speaking, for us today who "live at the culmination of the ages", that is, "upon whom the ends of the ages have come" in a very near and literal sense (1Cor.10:11 NKJV)? For us as well, time is running out. We can say for a certainty that whatever positive response this letter elicited in the Jerusalem church, that it was not sufficient to save the city and the country from disaster and devastation. That was prophesied to happen (Lk.19:41-44), and perhaps had to happen to remove the stumbling block of the temple – especially since even so the majority of the church-visible today is still locked in a deadly

embrace with the Law and its trappings (or perversions thereof in the case of, e.g., the Roman Catholic denomination and its like).

Likewise, the Tribulation will arrive right on time (only the precise timing is at issue). We believers of Laodicea, those of us who actually are positive to the truth, cannot hope to avert the coming of those terrible years no matter how great our faith and dedication, nor can we hope to save our country (whichever country that may be). But we can have absolute confidence in the opportunity of conducting ourselves in a manner that honors our dear Savior – which may also, God willing, result in preserving our own lives and the lives of those we love. Whether or not this happened for some of those in the Jerusalem church who were recipients of this warning epistle we do not know – but we can say for certain that all who did not heed it likely perished in the siege. The only thing worse – and it is much worse – would be if they neglected Paul's heartfelt warnings completely and allowed their faith to die before their physical bodies did.

Now these things occurred as examples *to keep us* from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.

1st Corinthians 10:6 NIV

Verse Five

For it is not to angels that He subordinated the world to come.

Hebrews 2:5

For: The Greek conjunction *gar* here indicates that what follows is an explanation of what has preceded, namely, Paul's entire prior debunking of the Gnostics' fascination with angels and their completely inappropriate elevation of these "ministering spirits" above their Lord and Master and ours, Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Before refuting in detail in the following chapters the dead legalism to which many in the Jerusalem church had returned, Paul will first lay the groundwork for that assault on the misuse of the Law of Moses by solidly establishing that human beings, not angels, are the purpose and the focus of God's plan, because it is through human beings – and most particularly through the one perfect human being, Jesus Christ our Lord – that the conflict which began in the angelic realm has been fought out and now won at the cross, thus fulfilling the Law of Moses which merely foreshadowed these blessed truths.

The World to Come: This phrase is not speaking of eternity but of the millennial kingdom of the Messiah. The Greek word translated "world" here *oikoumene*, transliterated into English as "ecumene", always means, as in English, the inhabited world (cf. Matt.24:14; Lk.2:1; 4:5; 21:26; Acts 11:28; 17:6; 17:31; 19:37; 24:5; Rom.10:18; Heb.1:6; Rev.3:10; 12:9; 16:14). Combining this word with the participle of *mello* (the standard verb used to express incipient action) renders the "world" described as a future one, not the present one, but the coming, blessed 1,000 year reign of our Lord Jesus Christ at His second advent return.

(6) "But as for Me, I have anointed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain." (7) I shall relate the Lord's decree. He said to Me, "You are My Son. Today I have begotten You. (8)

Ask of Me and I shall give [You] the nations as your inheritance, and as Your possession the ends of the earth. (9) You shall shepherd them with a rod of iron, and You shall shatter them like a potter's vessel. (10) So now, O kings, learn prudence! Take warning, you judges of the earth! (11) Serve the Lord with reverence and rejoice with trembling! (12) Kiss the Son (i.e., pay homage to Him), lest He become angry [with you] and you perish for your [insolent] behavior. For His anger may blaze up in an instant [if you do not]. Blessed are all those who take refuge in Him."
Psalm 2:6-12

For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.
1st Corinthians 15:25 NKJV

Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter (Ps.2:9)". He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.
Revelation 19:15 NIV

The Millennium is all about the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel through her Messiah and His Kingdom.⁵ For it is not through angels that God chose to resolve the warfare initiated by Satan's revolt but through humanity. Our Lord became a human being, not an angel, to redeem us from our sins. Because of the cross of Jesus Christ, we believers have been justified and returned to the status of sons and daughters of God Himself (Rom.8:14; Gal.4:6), and, as such, we are replacing the devil and his followers one for one, God demonstrating through the fulfillment of this glorious plan His justice in condemning Satan and the utter blasphemy of Satan's claim that such condemnation was somehow unjust: God has provided reconciliation for us – at an unimaginable cost, the spiritual death of His own dear Son – and would have done so for the rebel angels had they been willing to be reconciled.⁶

While the first Adam fell through the devil's attack, the Last Adam won the victory over Satan at the cross, redeeming sinful mankind and guaranteeing the advent of the glorious kingdom to come when our Lord returns to put an emphatic end to Satanic rule on earth, lost by the first Adam at the fall but regained by the Last Adam at the cross, and brought to full fruition in the thousand year reign of peace and prosperity under the perfect King demonstrating to all the difference between the grace, mercy, love and beneficence of God and the murderous and purely self-interested evil world kingdom of the devil (with the perfect environment of the Millennium under the perfect rule of the perfect King standing in starkest contrast to the most horrible time in history, the Tribulation, under the world rule of the devil's son, antichrist).

"On the day when I act," says the Lord Almighty, "they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him. (18)

⁵ See CT 6, section I.6, "The Regathering and Purging of Israel".

⁶ These matters are covered in detail in the Satanic Rebellion series; see especially SR 5: Judgment, Restoration, and Replacement.

And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not."

Malachi 3:17-18 NIV

Resurrected believers will share in our Lord's millennial rule (Matt.25:19-23; Lk.22:28; 1Cor.6:3; Rom.8:17; 2Tim.2:12; Rev.1:6; 2:26-27; 3:21; 20:4-6), while Israel, finally regathered from the wilderness of the nations, will be the seat of the Great King and enjoy blessings such as have never been bestowed on any nation in the history of the world.⁷ The millennium thus puts a divine exclamation point on the double victory of the two advents of Jesus Christ, contrasting the worst period of human history, the Tribulation under the direct rule of the devil's son, with the absolute best: the Millennium under the perfect rule of the Son of God Himself. All the blessings of that "world to come" are reserved for us who have chosen to follow Jesus Christ. For those who then and now and in the soon to come Tribulation choose to follow angels instead, let there be no doubt whom it is they are really serving in rejecting our Lord and Savior by so doing.

(8) Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. (9) "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." (10) Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.' "

Matthew 4:8-10 NIV

Verse Six through Eight (part one)

(6) But someone testifies at some point saying, "What is Man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you care for him? (7) You made him a little lower than the angels, you crowned him with glory and honor. You made him sovereign over all the works of your hands, (8) you put everything under his feet" (Ps.8:4-6).

Hebrews 2:6-8a

The Quotation of Psalm 8:4-6: Psalm 8 describes Man collectively in his capacity as the steward of God's creation, ministering within it according to God's will. So it is not at all surprising to discover from Paul's application of the Psalm here in Hebrews chapter two that this passage finds its ultimate prophetic fulfillment in the Last Adam, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come [i.e., Jesus Christ, the "Last Adam"].

Romans 5:14 NKJV

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

1st Corinthians 15:22 NKJV

⁷ See CT 6, section III, "The Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ".

And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit."

1st Corinthians 15:45 NKJV

The "someone" mentioned in Hebrews 2:6 as the author of Psalm 8 was, of course, David. Paul uses this phrase to introduce the citation not out of ignorance but to engage his readers, getting them to anticipate this quotation and discern who the author was and where the quote came from. The fact that this is not in any way a "puzzler" will have quickly turned his audiences self-satisfaction at recognizing this as a psalm of David into the realization of what Paul is doing: "What I am telling you is beyond obvious for anyone who knows the scriptures: you should have remembered this passage before as well as you are recalling it now".⁸

(11) We have much to say about this, but it is difficult to communicate [such advanced things to you] because your ears have become lazy. (12) And although by this time you ought to be [capable of] teaching [such things], you need someone to teach you what the basic principles of God's truth are again! You have turned [back] into [spiritual infants] who need milk and [can] not [yet tolerate] solid food! (13) For everyone who partakes of [such] milk is ignorant of the teaching of righteousness (i.e., how to live righteously), because he is a [spiritual] infant. (14) Solid [spiritual] food is for the [spiritually] mature, those who by [diligent] practice have trained their [moral] perceptive faculties to [properly] distinguish between good and evil.

Hebrews 5:11-14

But he who sets his gaze upon the perfect law of freedom (i.e., scripture – the perfect mirror of the heart) and sticks with it, and is not a [mere] forgetful hearer [of the Word], but a doer of deeds [inspired by the Word], that man will be blessed in his "doing" (i.e., following the truth he has learned and believed).

James 1:25

Readers of Greek literature will be familiar with the term "ring composition". This refers to the practice of many ancient authors of returning to a theme or topic, writing "rings around it", so to speak, for emphasis, elevation and repetition. Paul has been engaging in a similar practice since the beginning of this epistle and will continue with it to one degree or another all the way to the end of Hebrews. He started with the Son as superior to angels in His humanity as Savior and coming King; in the beginning of chapter two, Paul moves his focus to us, human beings whom Christ has saved – those who thus ought to be giving Him the proper respect, remembering the

⁸ This passage constitutes one of those rare occurrences where the KJV is correct and modern versions such as the NIV and ESV etc. (which had access to much more and much better Greek mss.) are wrong. The sentence from Psalm 8:6, "and didst set him over the works of thy hands" (KJV), is also present in our passage in Hebrews, but omitted from many modern versions which follow Nestle-Aland or other critical editions of the Greek New Testament that mistakenly omit this phrase. The sentence is present in two of the very best mss. of the GNT: [x] Aleph and [B] Vaticanus, and should rightly be included in any text or translation of Hebrews 2:7.

so-great salvation we have through faith in Him. Now, in the quotation we are presently studying, he focuses on the union of our Lord with us who believe in Him by citing a passage which on first glance is speaking of mankind in general, but which Paul will show is entirely Messianic, speaking of the fact *of* and the need *for* the Son to take on true humanity to save us – and not the angels (so that we share in His superiority to them).

Psalm 8 is a paean of David, lauding God for His mindfulness, care and blessing of mankind, in spite of the fact that we are so small and insignificant compared to His marvelous works, even compared to the angels (Ps.8:5). Nevertheless, despite our insignificance, God has made Man ruler over this earth and all that it contains – a fact that demands the highest praise for our Creator (Ps.8:9; cf. Ps.8:1-2). Man was created "lower than the angels" in order to resolve the conflict between God and Satan, firstly by replacing the devil and his followers and secondly, after Adam and Eve fell taking their entire progeny with them, by using us to demonstrate God's mercy upon all who may be estranged from Him through His willingness to provide a means of reconciliation and salvation at the highest possible cost to Him, the spiritual death of His Son, for all who are willing to receive it.

As a result of the fall, mankind lost a great measure of the sovereignty we were given at our creation (cf. 2Cor.4:4; 1Jn.5:19), ceding it to the evil one who tempted our first parents into sin (Lk.4:6; Jn.12:31; 14:30; 16:11). But our authority over the world was never entirely lost (cf. Eph.2:2)⁹, and through the victory of Jesus Christ it has now been regained in principle – and will in short order be regained in practice to a degree not anticipated in Eden (Rev.20:1-4). Jesus Christ was always meant to be and was always going to be the Victor who won at the cross the conflict with the forces of evil. He was always destined to be, in the perfect plan of God which has never changed since He first initiated the creation of the world, the Last Adam, the glorious King of Kings and Lord of Lords *for whom* all of this, creation and history and the ultimate resolution of all things in eternal blessedness with the resurrection, millennial kingdom, and final coming of the eternal state, was ordained.

"Ask of Me and I shall give You the nations as Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth as your possession."

Psalm 2:8

Paul's quotation from Psalm 8, therefore, powerfully connects we the saved (Heb.2:1-3) with the Savior: the archetypical Man under whose feet the Father has placed, will place, and always purposed to place "all things" – until the final chapter of history has been written (1Cor.15:27-28). Moreover, Paul makes this connection in the context of man/mankind and the prophetic Son of Man being described as "a little lower than the angels" (Ps.8:5; Heb.2:7). Paul's purpose is to show now why the Son had to become a human being, why He had to come the first time without glory, why this was all necessary to save us, and why angelic superiority of power was temporary in the case of Christ (recalling Hebrews chapter one where Christ's present superiority in every way is undeniably established) but also, at our own resurrection, in our case as well. For it was

⁹ See BB 2A: Angelology, section II.6, "The Limits of Satan's World Rule" and section II.6.5, "The limits of Satan's control over the world".

"not to angels that He subordinated the world to come" (Heb.2:5) but to a true human being, the Son of Man – and by virtue of our being united to Him to we who are "His at His coming" as well (1Cor.15:25), that is, we believers in Jesus Christ who will share in His authority beginning with our own resurrection and throughout His millennial reign (Matt.25:19-23; Lk.22:28; 1Cor.6:3; Rom.8:17; 2Tim.2:12; Rev.1:6; 2:26-27; 3:21; 20:4-6).

. . . turning our gaze unto Jesus, the originator and completer of our faith (cf. "Alpha and Omega"), who, for *the joy set before Him*, endured the shame of the cross, treating it with despite, and took His seat at the right hand of the throne of God.
Hebrews 12:2

We believers are Christ's joy, His delight, His Body, His Bride. He loved us so much that although He is glory itself (Jn.1:14; Heb.1:3; 1Jn.1:5), the Light of the world (Jn.1:4-9; 8:12; 9:5), God eternal (Jn.1:18; Rom.9:5; Tit.2:13; Heb.1:8; 1Jn.5:20), He became a human being in order to save us. And the Father loved us so much that He sacrificed His one and only dear Son to provide us with an eternity of blessing, judging Him in our place to take away our sins, the only way in which we could be saved.

For God loved the world so much that He gave [up] His one and only Son, [with the purpose] that everyone who believes in Him should not be lost [forever], but have eternal life [instead].
John 3:16

Yes, our heavenly Father is definitely "mindful" of us, small as we are, and that *is* truly amazing. For there is no greater indication of His concern for us than the gift of His Son, judging Him in our place that we might be His children forever. In rescuing us from death, darkness, the grave and the lake of fire through His own blood, our dear Savior has also regained for us the rulership of this world lost in great part at the fall. Moreover, the time of our resumption of rule over this world is very close at hand at present (Rom.8:19-23), the time when we will rise as one Church, the Bride of the Son of God, the Son of Man who made this world and for whom this world was made, joining Him as regents over all that is forever and ever.

"And He has made us a kingdom, priests of His God and Father – to Him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen."
Revelation 1:6

(26) "And to the one who wins the victory and gives heed to My works until the end, I will give to him authority over the nations. (27) And he will shepherd them with an iron rod and crush them like vessels of clay, (28) just as I have received [the authority] from My Father. And I will give him the Morning Star."
Revelation 2:26-28

"The one who wins the victory, I will grant him to sit with Me on my throne just as I also have won the victory and have taken my seat with my Father on His throne."
Revelation 3:21

(9) And they sang a new song, saying, "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain and have purchased with your blood for our God [men] from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, (10) and have made them into a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will rule upon the earth!"

Revelation 5:9-10

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying, "The world Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ has [now] come, and He will rule forever and ever. Amen".

Revelation 11:15

Blessed and holy is the one who has a share in this first resurrection! Over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him for the thousand years.

Revelation 20:4-6

Verse Eight (part two)

For in subordinating the world to Him, He left nothing that was not subordinate to Him. However, we do not now yet see the world in subordination to Him.

Hebrews 2:8b

Nothing not Subordinate: Jesus Christ is the Last Adam (1Cor.15:45; cf. Rom.5:14; 15:22), *the* archetypal Son of God who completes the purpose of humanity originally entrusted to Adam (Gen.1:26-30; cf. Lk.3:38). In this verse, Paul interprets Psalm 8 as referring first and foremost not to the original Adam (although it does apply to him originally), and not to mankind as a whole (although it does apply to us all at least partially), but to the One who has won the victory in the conflict that Adam was created to resolve. As the Victor, Christ has regained mastery of the world for mankind (Ps.2:8; Jn.19:28-30; Col.2:15), and that reclamation is what Paul is describing in our context verse: the Father placed Christ *in His humanity* officially in charge of the entire world as the reward for His victory on the cross – and there was nothing in heaven or earth over which our King of Kings and Lord of Lords was not given complete sovereignty when He appeared before God the Father in glory at His ascension.

(20) Which [power] He (i.e., the Father) exercised in Christ by having raised Him from the dead and having seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly [places] (21) far above every other rulership or authority or power or lordship and [far above] every other name which may be mentioned not only in this age but also in the age to come. (22) And He (i.e., the Father) *subordinated all things* under [Christ's] feet and gave Him [as] Head over all things in the Church (23) which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills up all things in all ways.

Ephesians 1:20-23

This "subordination of all things" includes, of course, not only the Church and unsaved humanity as well, but also all of the angels, elect and fallen. Therefore Psalm 8 as quoted and interpreted

in the Spirit by Paul in our context thus anticipates the restoration of mankind's rulership of the earth under the new regency of *the* Son of man, the Son of God, but expands that mandate to "all things" in heaven and on earth, demonstrating again that Jesus is Lord of all, angels as well as human beings, by virtue of the victory He has won for us all. That is the promise for whose fulfillment we all breathlessly wait.

We do not yet see the World in Subordination:

(1) The Lord said to My Lord, "Sit down at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." (2) From Zion the Lord will send forth your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! (3) Your people will volunteer on the day of your valor[ous victory] (i.e., the armies of Israel). In the holy chambers, from the womb of the dawn, your young [troops] will [come] to you like the dew (i.e., the armies of the newly resurrected). (4) The Lord has sworn and He will not recant, "You are a priest forever in the manner of Melchizedek." (5) The Lord is at your right hand. He will shatter [those] kings on the day of His wrath. (6) He will render judgment on the nations. He will shatter [their] head (cf. Gen.3:15) broadly throughout the land filled with corpses [as a result]. (7) [But as to His troops], they will drink from a brook beside the way. Therefore He will lift up their head.
Psalm 110:1-7

Although our Lord is now Lord and Master of all that is, just as the messianic Psalm quoted above relates, "we do not now yet see the world in subordination to Him". That positional subordination which already belongs to our Savior in principle will not be put into place in practice until the end of the Tribulation, after the resurrection and the battle of Armageddon – in which we His Church will participate.¹⁰ But not until the second advent. Our Lord has been instructed by the Father to wait "until" that critical moment to assume His rightful rule. Just as our Lord's contemporaries universally misunderstood the principle that the cross had to precede the crown as they hailed their king on "Palm Sunday" (Matt.21:9; 21:15; Mk.11:9-10; Lk.19:37-38; Jn.12:13) – and cried for His crucifixion shortly thereafter – so the Jerusalem church appears to have allowed itself to become sloppy in an analogous way, not quite to the point of emulating the rebellion embodied in the following quote but coming dangerously close:

(3) Keep this foremost in your mind: in the end times cynics will ridicule [the truth], acting out of their own selfish lusts (4) and saying, "Where is that 'return' He promised? Everything is the same now as it was since the beginning of the world, since the time our forefathers passed on."
2nd Peter 3:3-4

That "return" wherein our Lord will take up the rule over His millennial kingdom is having to wait . . . for our sake; to wait, that is, until "the full number of the gentiles" has been brought into the Church (Rom.11:25), so that we believers of the Church Age, the entire Bride of Christ, Jew

¹⁰ See CT 6, section I.4.e, "The Participation of the Resurrected Church in this Operation".

and gentile alike, might all be saved with none left out (Heb.11:39-40). But that need to wait, that delay in the coming of the Kingdom, was no excuse for these believers to be turning back to the Law (or running off to "other things" such as the Gnostics were doing).

(11) We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized. (12) We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.
Hebrews 6:11-12 NIV

Verse Nine

But we do now see Jesus crowned with glory and honor on account of the death He suffered, even Him who became "a little lower than the angels" [for a brief span] so that by the grace of God He might taste death on behalf of us all.
Hebrews 2:9

Throughout this epistle, Paul is having to balance his corrective teaching to counter both failings besetting the Jerusalem church, focusing now on the problem of legalism, now on the problem of Gnosticism. The fact that the two do overlap, as we have seen – as in fact all lies share a common source and a common objective – does help to facilitate this task. Here in verse nine, reminding all of the victory of the Messiah, who only "became" lower than the angels in His humanity for a brief space of time (the first advent) with the express purpose of saving us from our sins, confounds the Gnostics by affirming Christ's absolute superiority over all angels, while at the same time that it puts the legalists to shame by directly connecting the Messiah's victory and glorification with His humble sacrifice of Himself in order to win that victory – the cross having already been accomplished (Jn.19:28-30) but disrespected by them through returning to the Law.

Readers who compare the translation of Hebrews 2:9 above to those of most versions will see that this one correctly adjusts Paul's characteristic parenthetical method whereby he defers a main point for emphasis (discussed in the introduction¹¹), a practice which works well enough in Greek for those paying close attention but not so well in English. One other notable place where Paul is seen to use this technique is in the book of Romans (Rom.2:12-16). Another important similarity with Hebrews seen in Romans is the need to balance the arguments of that epistle as well between two groups that need correction: while Paul must contend with Gnostics and legalists in Hebrews, it is gentile versus Jewish believers who require separate but balanced correction in Romans; and just as Romans begins with a critique of lawlessness meant to get those of Jewish background nodding in support – but then quickly segues into combating the excesses of legalism – so also in Hebrews Paul berates Gnostic ideas first, even though the bulk of the epistle will focus on the Jerusalem church's abandoning of the cross and grace for obsolete ritual and Law (Heb.8:13; cf. Heb.7:12).

In both epistles, Paul is careful never to let either group "up for air" and does take every

¹¹ See Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews: Introduction, section I.2, "Style".

opportunity to continue hammering away at abuses arising from both camps, even when one or the other is coming in for special emphasis. That is the case here in Hebrews chapter two as well. Christ having to "become *temporarily*" lower than the angels asserts by implication His prior and present superiority (anti-Gnostic); but the thrust of this chapter is the necessity for the Son of God to become the Son of Man, to take on true humanity (in addition to His eternal deity) in order to take away the sins of the world. "Crowned with glory and honor" means that the victory of the God-Man Jesus Christ our Lord has already been won, therefore making it abundantly clear that the redemption foreshadowed in the Law has already been accomplished – rendering it obsolete (anti-legalism).

Crowned with Glory and Honor on account of Death: The death our Lord suffered for us on Calvary's cross was a spiritual death, being judged for all of our sins in the three hour period of darkness between the sixth and the ninth hour on the cross (i.e., His physical death followed only when He exhaled His spirit of his own free will once the victory was completed: Matt.27:50; Mk.15:37; Lk.23:46; Jn.19:28-30).¹² The spiritual death of Christ is directly equated with His suffering throughout scripture (e.g., Ps.22:15; Is.53:11-12). And His suffering, being judged for every single sin of mankind, was clearly intense (Heb.2:10-18; 13:12-13); but it was through that suffering that Jesus made salvation available to the entire human race (Rom.5:15-21).

It is as a result of this great victory over sin that our Lord has been "crowned with glory and honor". The Greek word for "crowned" here refers not to the "diadem" (Gr. *diadema*) or kingly crown (of which sort our Lord has also won many: e.g., Rev.19:12), but to the crown of reward (Gr. *stephanos*) given to victors in various competitions, athletic and otherwise, as well as to political and military heroes. Everything about our Lord's victory in being judged for our sins in the darkness – along with the taking on of true humanity, the life of trouble and ministry through such opposition He endured, and the gauntlet He ran to get to the cross preceding it – is meritorious. Because of His merit, He has received the highest Name and all glory and honor from the Father; because of His meritorious death for us, we have been gifted with salvation completely apart from any merit on our part – strictly through God's grace (Rom.3:24; 4:16; 5:2; 9:16; 11:6).

(8) For you have been saved by [God's] grace through faith [in Christ]; and this did not come from you – it is God's gift. (9) Nor did it come from what you have done, lest anyone should boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

But instead of being grateful, a good portion of the Jerusalem church was still working for their salvation through reverting to the Law (legalists) or seeking to "help God" by engaging in the unseen combat with demon forces (Gnostics), both being inimical to grace which only responds to faith.

(15) But the offense [of the former, Adam] is not at all like the favor [of the latter, Christ]. For though it is true that the human race is perishing on account of the offense of

¹² See BB 4A: Christology, section II.5, "The Spiritual Death of Christ".

that one man [Adam], how much more has the grace of God and His gracious Gift of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to this same human race! (16) Indeed, the Gift is not at all like [the universal death that came] through [that] one person who sinned. For [in the former case] the [divine] judgment [that resulted] from one [person led] to [universal] condemnation, but the [divine] favor [based upon the sacrifice of the One has led] to the accomplishment of [universal] justification in response to many offenses.
Romans 5:11-16

How exactly Christ was put to death for every human sin, punished and made to suffer in our places that we might be saved is as awe-inspiringly unfathomable as the contemplation of God Himself (Rom.11:33).¹³ But just as we know that there is a God from what He has done and does (Rom.1:18-20), so also we know that Jesus paid the full price for all our sins in His own blood, because we owe our salvation to Him and what He did for us during those three hours of darkness on the cross (Rom.5:8; 10:6-13). Sinners that we are, we are nevertheless considered righteous by the Father, justified by the blood of Christ, His spiritual death in dying for all of our sins . . . when we respond *in faith*. (Rom.3:28; Gal.2:16; 3:24).

The Lord said to My Lord, "Sit down at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."
Psalm 110:1

As our context verse teaches, the session of our Lord at the Father's right hand (following His resurrection and ascension) comes as a result of His meritorious victory over death through His work on the cross for our sakes. That is why our Savior has been "crowned with many crowns" (Rev.19:12). All things are His by virtue of who He is, it is true, but as a result of His triumph the Father has bestowed on Christ as a part of the inheritance He has won at the cross the Name that outranks every angelic name (cf. Heb.1:4-5) and has given all things in heaven and on earth into His hands as a reward for that victory.

(7) I shall relate the Lord's decree. He said to Me, "You are My Son. Today I have begotten You. (8) Ask of Me and I shall give [You] the nations as your inheritance, and as Your possession the ends of the earth.
Psalm 2:7-8

(20) Which [divine power] He (i.e., the Father) exercised in Christ by having raised Him from the dead and having seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly [places] (21) far above every other rulership or authority or power or lordship and [far above] every other name which may be mentioned not only in this age but also in the age to come. (22) And He (i.e., the Father) subordinated all things under [Christ's] feet and gave Him [as] Head over all things in the Church (23) which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills up all things in all ways.
Ephesians 1:20-23

¹³ See BB 4A: Christology, section II, "The Saving Work of Jesus Christ".

(9) Therefore God exalted [Christ] to the highest place and gave Him the Name that is above every name (10) that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth (11) and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:9-11 (cf. Is.45:23; Rom.14:11)

Though we cannot yet see our Lord in His glorified state (1Pet.1:8; Heb.11:27; cf. 1Tim.6:16), glorified as a human being now as well as God, having won the victory over Satan that has freed us from our sins, all that is to come is glorious (e.g., Is.9:5-7; Matt.25:31; Rev.1:12-16; 19:11-16; 20:11), and we will share in His glory as we share in all things which belong to Him as members of His Body, His Church, His glorious Bride (2Cor.11:2-3; Eph.1:22-23; 5:22-33; Rev.19:7-14; 21:2-4; 21:9ff.; 22:17), heirs of the New Covenant in His blood (Matt.26:28; Mk.14:24; Lk.22:20; 1Cor.11:25; cf. Acts 20:32; 26:18) heirs to a glorious inheritance that is ours forever as those who belong to Jesus Christ (Matt.5:5; 19:29; 25:34; Rom.8:17; Gal.3:29; 4:7; Eph.1:11; 1:14; 1:18; 3:6; 5:5; Col.1:12; 3:24; Tit.3:7; Heb.1:14; 6:12; 6:17; 9:15; 11:7; 11:9; Jas.2:5; 1Pet.1:4; 3:7; 3:9; 5:3; Rev.21:7). [INDEX]

Became a Little Lower than the Angels: As we have mentioned before, "becoming a little lower than the angels" necessitates understanding that our Savior was of course originally much higher than the angels – He is their Creator just as He is ours. Inherent in these words, therefore, is a total upending of the logic of the Gnostics' position (which falsely taught that Jesus was essentially equal to the angels, not supremely more powerful and certainly not their Creator) as well as a complete rebuking of the implicit beliefs of the legalists who have returned to the Law as if Christ had not fulfilled it (for in doing so they were following in the footsteps of the unbelieving Jews who preferred to acknowledge only a conquering Messiah and rather than the not yet glorified Son of Man who would save them and us from our sins through His own blood; cf. Gal.5:11; Heb.11:26).

The Father "made Him a little lower than the angels" because that was the only way for our Lord Jesus Christ to carry out the plan of God for salvation: only as a genuine, perfect human being could He bear the sins of the world in His human body. And that was the only way we could be saved after the fall. So while Psalm 8:5 does refer to humanity in general, all of the sons of God, its primary meaning is just as Paul employs it here: it refers in the main to *the* Son of God who became *the* Son of Man, the one and only human being who could do what we needed to be done in order to escape perdition and have eternal life through faith in Him.

(1) So now, there [awaits] no judgment of condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the Law of sin and death.

Romans 8:1-2

How wonderful that God should become a human being, that deity should take on true humanity . . . in order to save us! By doing this, God has wed Himself to this creation forever. The magnitude of the incarnation and the sacrifice it made possible is impossible to understand in full this side of heaven. There is only one creation, now and forever; only one perfect plan, and Jesus

Christ is that plan, that Logos, the one who has paid for everything with His own blood, His spiritual death on the cross on our behalf, made possible by His being willing to become a human being and walk through this world as one "a little lower than the angels" until He had accomplished eternal salvation for us all.

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, *despising the shame*, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:2 KJV

That by the Grace of God He might taste Death on behalf of us All: If the plan of God has a name, it is "grace". Grace, as we have discussed many times in the past, is not magic – even though all too many Christian denominations (let alone cults) employ the word as if it were. Grace is, simply put, God's favor. And God's favor is something He gives freely to all who desire Him and His truth – when that desire is expressed in the manner He has provided, *through faith*, that is, through our trusting in Him by utilizing the image of God we have all been given to choose for Him through His Son our Lord Jesus Christ. Grace thus cannot be worked for (Rom.4:4; Gal.2:16; Eph.2:8-9).

(30) What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; (31) but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. (32) Why? Because they did not seek it *by faith*, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. (33) As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever *believes* on Him will not be put to shame."

Romans 9:30-33 NKJV

Working for God's favor is thus the one sure way to incur His wrath instead. Anyone who thinks to "do something for God" in order to obtain His grace, His favor – as if He needed *our* help instead of the other way around – is only putting him/herself beyond the pale of genuine God-given grace.

(5) Moses writes about the righteousness that comes through the law, "The person who *does* them will live in it" (Lev.18:5). (6) But the righteousness that comes through faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend to heaven?' " – that is, to bring Christ down – (7) "or 'Who will descend into the Abyss?' " – that is, to bring Christ up from the dead. (8) But what does it say? "The word is near you: [it is] in your mouth and in your heart." That is the word *of faith* that we proclaim.

Romans 10:5-8 [INDEX]

The Father did not need anyone's help to bring Christ down to earth, nor to raise Him from the dead. And dying for sin, any sin, was the thing most impossible for any human being to even contemplate. We were helpless and hopeless and absolutely so – until Jesus Christ came to rescue us from our impossible situation, to turn darkness, fear and death into light and joy and life . . . by giving Himself up to suffer death for us, the spiritual death of dying for the sins of the

world, the only way we could be saved from eternal condemnation. Assuming that God needs our help is thus the height of arrogance – yet it is the essence of legalism and Gnosticism, and only one small step removed from seeking to replace Him as the real author and instigator of these two foul movements has always been seeking to do (in emulation of the devil who inspires them).

(6) For not only did Christ die for us while we were helpless – He even did so at the critical time, [dying] on our behalf, ungodly though we were. (7) For scarcely will someone die on behalf of a righteous person; and perhaps someone might also risk death on behalf of a good person. (8) But God commends His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:6-8

No one could be more undeserving than an unsaved human being. Yet the Father sent His Son to die for us all. He had no necessity to do so. He had no necessity to create us in the first place, or the angels, or this world. But He did so. For our sake. He did so out of love (Jn.3:16), to share Himself with us in the only way in which He could do so and have us be who we are, those blessed with the image of God and charged with making our own decision about eternity. And it cost the Father and the Son and the Spirit to do so far more than we can ever understand before kingdom come.

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

1st John 4:14-16 NIV

(14) And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. (15) If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. (16) And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.

Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

1st John 4:14-16 NIV

Even though He remained physically alive until after the judgment was completed, what our Lord did for us in paying the fiery price of judgment for all of our sins in those three hours of darkness on the cross is called "death" for two reasons: first, because there is nothing more terrible for any human being to contemplate; second, because "death" in scripture is a separation, and while He was being judged for our sins our Lord Jesus in His human nature was "dead to the Father" – as He had to be when all of the sins of the world were poured out in His human body (since God is holy and cannot have direct contact with sin; cf. Ex.3:5; 15:11; Lev.11:44-45; 21:8; Ps.22:3; 29:2; 30:4; 93:5; 99:9; Is.6:3; 43:15; 55:5b-9; 57:15; Acts 3:14; Rev.4:8).¹⁴ This was "spiritual death", far more painful than any physical death anyone has ever experienced and to an infinite degree, with the separation from the Father necessary to be judged for our sins constituting a

¹⁴ The judgment was only even made possible through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Heb.9:14); see BB 4A: Christology, section II.5.f.2, "The Baptism of Christ: The Role of the Holy Spirit".

tremendous sacrifice for which we have no frame of reference.

Our Lord's bearing of all human sin is also called "the blood of Christ" for two reasons: first, because there is no more visceral, graphic way to express the terrible spiritual death He suffered; second, because this "blood" deliberately connects His spiritual death for sin with the animal sacrifices of the past which were designed to symbolize and foreshadow it.¹⁵ Every animal sacrifice under the Law and even before the Law was symbolic of the spiritual death which the Messiah would endure to save us from our sins, and for that reason Jesus is called "the Lamb of God" (Jn.1:29; 1:36; 1Pet.1:19; Rev.5:6-13; 6:1; 7:9-10; 13:11; 14:1; 22:1; cf. Is.53:7; Acts 8:32).

But when this letter was first received in Jerusalem, everything which these sacrifices symbolized and foreshadowed had *already* been fulfilled by the coming of our Lord, His death on our behalf, and His resurrection, ascension and session, all according to many Old Testament prophecies (cf. Lk.24:25-27; Rom.3:21-22), assurances from the Law itself that its purpose had been accomplished and thus it was now obsolete (Heb.8:13; cf. Heb.7:12). The Jerusalem believers had become "slow of hearing" (Heb.5:11; 6:12), having forgotten even these elementary teachings about Jesus Christ so as to be in need of milk as those not yet weaned (Heb.5:12; 6:1).

On the next day, [John] saw Jesus coming towards him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, the One who takes away *the sin of the world*".

John 1:29

And He Himself is the atonement for our sins, and not just for ours, but also for *the entire world*.

1st John 2:2

Jesus Christ died for every single human being who has ever or who will ever live (Jn.3:16-18; 12:47; 2Cor.5:14-15; 1Tim.2:4-6; 4:10; 1Jn.4:14).¹⁶ He paid the entire price for the sins of the whole human race. What Paul says here, therefore, that Christ died "for *us* all" is certainly true. For Jesus is "the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe" (1Tim.4:10 NKJV). But by saying so in this way at this juncture, Paul brings "*us*" believing human beings back into the argument and closes the ring again full circle: *we* who belong to Jesus Christ share in Him and all that He has and is by virtue of *our* union with Christ. Therefore *we* also share in His superiority to the angels, contrary to all Gnostic teaching (cf. 1Cor.6:3); therefore as those who have been justified by His blood, something that was impossible through the blood sacrifices of the Law (Rom.8:1-3), *we* will also share in His reign because of His victory over death on the cross.

For though it is true that on account of the offense of the one death reigned through that one (i.e., by Adam passing down his sin to his progeny), how much more will those (i.e.,

¹⁵ See BB 4A: Christology, section II.4, "The Blood of Christ".

¹⁶ See BB 3B: Hamartiology, section III.2.4, "The Universality of the Atonement"; and BB 4A: Christology, section II.3, "Unlimited Atonement".

we believers) who receive this abundance of grace, even this Gift of righteousness [through justification] *rule in [eternal] life* through [the sacrifice of] the One, Jesus Christ!
Romans 5:17

Verse Ten

For it was fitting for [the Father] to make complete through sufferings Him on whose account all things exist and through whom all things exist, namely, the Captain of their salvation, even Him who has led many sons to glory, [our Lord Jesus Christ].
Hebrews 2:10

Fitting: This is not a standard way of putting things in scripture. God can do whatever He pleases since He is God. But Paul feels the need to justify the Father's actions in explaining – or really re-explaining – Christ's sacrifice to the Jerusalem believers. That is probably because they have proven themselves by their actions not only to be forgetful and willing now to compromise the truth by returning to the Law but also have shown themselves to be somewhat embarrassed by the cross. This, as we know, was a problem for the Jews of our Lord's day, eager for the Messiah but unwilling to accept what prophecy had said about the Suffering Servant (e.g., Is.52:13-15; 53:1-12).

. . . turning our gaze unto Jesus, the originator and completer of our faith (cf. "Alpha and Omega"), who, for the joy set before Him, *endured the shame of the cross, treating it with despise*, and took His seat at the right hand of the throne of God.
Hebrews 12:2

Our Lord did not let the "shame" of the treatment meted out to Him keep Him from accomplishing the mission upon which He had been sent – the mission to *save us*. It is therefore incumbent upon us to likewise "despise" whatever worldly shame may come our way from being "Christians", originally a term of despise, being determined to follow in our Lord's footsteps whatever the cost (cf. Rev.13:10; 14:12).¹⁷

(24) By faith, Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, (25) and chose instead to suffer maltreatment with the people of God rather than to enjoy the transitory pleasures of sin, because he considered *the reproach [suffered on behalf] of Christ* greater riches than the treasure vaults of Egypt. (26) For he was looking to his reward.
Hebrews 11:24-26

(12) Therefore Jesus too, in order that He might sanctify the people through His own blood (i.e., His death on the cross), suffered outside the gate (i.e., separated from fellowship). (13) So then let us go out to Him outside of the camp (i.e., likewise choosing God over the world), *bearing His reproach*.

¹⁷ See Peter's Epistles #36, footnote #9.

Hebrews 13:12-13

The Father's action in handing His beloved Son over to suffering in spiritual death and judging Him in our place was thus obviously *not* arbitrary. We may be absolutely sure that if there were *any* other way for us to be saved, for the plan of God for salvation to be effected, for there to be an eternity populated by human beings and angels who had been given the image of God and who had employed it to gratefully choose to be with the Lord rather than to rebel from Him (in the manner of Satan and his angels) or refuse to use it to return to Him (in the manner of unbelievers), then surely the cross would have been avoided.

He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."
Matthew 26:39 NKJV

And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."
Mark 14:36 NKJV

Saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."
Luke 22:42 NKJV

But there was *no* other way (and our Lord's words recorded for us by the Spirit above were said for *our* benefit that we might understand this). There could not be any other way. The very fact of giving everyone the image of God meant that some would choose to use it to resist Him instead of to respond to Him. Therefore the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was always at the very heart of the Father's plan. And for that reason, the Father's subjection of His Son to suffering and death for our sake – agreed to by our Lord out of His great love for us, the "joy set before Him" (Heb.12:2; cf. Jn.3:16) – was indeed "fitting" . . . even if some stupendously ungrateful individuals were now ashamed of the very cross and the suffering of spiritual death by our Lord thereupon whereby they were saved from the lake of fire.

To Make Complete: The Greek infinitive used here, *teleiosai*, meaning "to make complete" is derived from the Greek adjective *teleios*, "complete", a key term in the New Testament which always looks towards that which is perfect and eternal in contrast with everything temporary and partial. As such, this morpheme is the most frequently used term in scripture to refer to spiritual maturity (Matt.5:48; 19:21; Jn.17:23; 1Cor.14:20; Col.3:14; 4:12; Heb.5:14; 6:1a; 1Pet.1:13; 1Jn.4:12; 4:17; Jas.2:22; 3:2).

However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature (*teleioi*), yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.
1st Corinthians 2:6 NKJV

(12) [It is] not that I have already gotten [what I am striving for], nor that I have already completed [my course] (*teteleiomai*). Rather, I am continuing to pursue [the prize] in hopes of fully acquiring it – [this prize for whose acquisition] I was myself acquired by

Christ Jesus. (13) Brethren, I do not consider that I have already acquired it. This one thing only [do I keep in mind]. Forgetting what lies behind me [on the course] and straining towards the [course] ahead, (14) I continue to drive straight for the tape, towards the prize to which God has called us from the beginning [of our race] in Christ Jesus. (15) So as many as are [spiritually] mature (*teleioi*), let us have this attitude . . .
Philippians 3:12-15a

(2) Brothers, when you are being beset with all manner of trials, take pains to be joyful. (3) For you should keep in mind that this testing of your faith develops perseverance. (4) So let your perseverance develop fully (*teleion*), that you may become fully mature (*teleioi*) and entitled to a full reward, having been found lacking in no respect.
James 1:2-4

Our "completion" as believers is based entirely upon our successful following, to the point of spiritual maturity, the example of our Lord Jesus Christ (1Pet.2:21). He, of course, led a perfect life in every way. But, imperfect by nature as we are, the "perfection" or "completion" we are striving to attain has to do with spiritual growth, that is, accomplishing the mission He has given us all to complete in emulation of Him through the power of the Holy Spirit and the truth of the Word of God. This opportunity could only fall to our lot as a result of the perfect completion by the Son of Man of His own mission, humbly and obediently submitting Himself to the Father's will at all times until *the* victory of the plan of God had been accomplished in full.

(28) After [all] this (i.e., our Lord's physical suffering and His spiritual death for the sins of the world), when Jesus knew that everything had now been accomplished (*tetelestai*) in order for the [prophecy of salvation found in] scripture to be fulfilled, He said, "I am thirsty". (29) Now a jar of wine-vinegar lay there, so they placed a sponge full of the wine-vinegar on a hyssop [stalk] and brought it to His mouth. (30) So when He had taken the wine-vinegar, Jesus said, "*It* (i.e., salvation) *has [now] been accomplished!*" (*tetelestai*), and having thrown back His head, He gave up His spirit.
John 19:28-30

At the cross, through our Lord's great sacrifice on our behalf, therefore, the entire plan of God was "made complete". And as Jesus Christ is the Logos, the very plan of God Himself, it "was fitting" for the Father to "complete *Him*", that is, to bring the plan itself to completion in Him, in the only way in which our sins could be atoned for and the victory of salvation, now "*accomplished!*", could be achieved: the spiritual death of Jesus Christ whereby He successfully atoned for all of our sins.

Through Sufferings: Everything about our Lord's human life was difficult. We cannot imagine what a sacrifice it was for God to take on a human body, a human nature, to become a genuine man as well as God. That our God should do this for us is beyond amazing, and as mere human beings we simply have no context to understand what it cost the Father to have His Son do so. For by becoming human as well as God, Jesus bound Himself to this creation irreversibly, and committed Himself to dying for it – likewise committing the Father and the Spirit to the judgment of the cross.

(16) For God loved the world so much that He gave [up] His one and only Son, [with the purpose] that everyone who believes in Him should not be lost [forever], but have eternal life [instead]. (17) For God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him.

John 3:16-17

Yes, after our Lord's human spirit was created in His human body at birth after the manner of us all, everything about our Lord's earthly life was difficult indeed. Born without a sin nature (the purpose of the virgin conception/birth), Jesus had to maintain His perfect sinlessness absolutely all the way to and through the cross in order for His sacrifice on our behalf to be acceptable and therefore efficacious in providing salvation for us. For any Christian who has come to understand the subtlety of sin, it is clear that this necessity in itself was an incredibly daunting duty to have to fulfill. And our Lord had to do so while under more aggressive satanic attack from forces seen (Heb.12:3) and unseen (Matt.4:1-11; Mk.1:12-13; Lk.4:1-13) than any other human being in the history of the world to an unknowably immense degree. And our Lord had to do so while living a life of perfect responsibility without fail in everything He was called to do as a son and brother and member of the community. And our Lord had to do so while making perfect use of every spare second, every ounce of energy, to prepare for the ministry of ministries He was called to perform. And when He had accomplished that ministry perfectly in every way, He had to endure the ordeal of the seven trials that preceded His spiritual death for us all,¹⁸ with all their unfairness, slander, mocking, and physical abuse (e.g., Is.52:14). And once He had endured all of that, crucified and abused beyond anything any other human being could ever have taken, when the darkness fell on Calvary, our Lord had to bear and be judged for every single human sin, even for the sins of those who would reject Him, in order for His sacrifice to satisfy God's justice and for us to be saved. And all of this He had to do in His humanity without the help of His deity.¹⁹ *This* was the suffering through which our dear Lord Jesus was "made complete", through which He opened up the door to life eternal for us by going into the fiery darkness of spiritual death to save us all.²⁰

He lay bare His life unto death, and was dealt with as transgressors [are], so that He bore the sin of the many, and substituted [Himself] for the transgressors.
Isaiah 53:12b

He made Him who had no [personal] experience of sinning [to be] sin (i.e., a sin offering) for us, so that we might have (lit., "become") God's righteousness in Him.
2nd Corinthians 5:21

He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, in order that we might die to sins and

¹⁸ See BB 4A: Christology, section I.5.k, "The Trials of Christ".

¹⁹ See BB 4A: Christology, section 5.e, "The Hypostatic Union and Kenosis".

²⁰ See BB 4A: Christology, section II.4, "The Blood of Christ", and section II.5, "The Spiritual Death of Christ".

live to righteousness. By His wound you are healed.

1st Peter 2:24

The Captain of our Salvation: I have translated the remainder of this verse as follows: ". . . Him on whose account all things exist and through whom all things exist, namely, the Captain of their salvation, even *Him* who has led many sons to glory, [our Lord Jesus Christ]." Comparing this translation to any standard version will demonstrate that there are widespread problems with understanding the Greek text here: it is *Jesus Christ* who "has led many sons to glory" through His work on the cross. Confusion on this point comes from a lack of understanding of the very common principle of ellipsis of pronouns in Greek. To put that in layman's terms, the "Him", referring to Jesus Christ here, does not need to present for us to understand that this is what is meant. And in fact, the "Him" was there in the original letter (as we know through consulting the Queen of the ancient Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, Codex Sinaiticus, where it is present).

The above is important because the entire context of this chapter has to do with relating our Lord Jesus Christ to us, the Son of God who became the Son of Man and who through His great sacrifice rescued many "sons and daughters", His Body, His Bride, His Church. So while it is certainly true that the Father as the Originator of the plan of God could be said to have "led many sons to glory" as well, that is not what the verse actually says on the one hand; and on the other hand Paul says this the way he actually says it in order to emphasize Jesus' essential connection to saved humanity: we exist for Him and because of Him ("on whose account all things exist and through whom all things exist").

Human beings are neither an accident nor a reaction to events. The plan of God is founded on the fact of our creation. After all, Jesus *is* the Logos, the plan of God Himself, the Cornerstone of all that is (Col.15:20), and He has won the victory of the cross which empowers the plan through becoming one *with us*, and by dying for *our* sins. There need be no cross without human beings requiring salvation. The plan of God, therefore, should be looked at not only historically, taking things from the beginning, but also teleologically. What is the "end game" of the plan? It is New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ (Matt.9:15; Matt.25:1-13; Mk.2:19; Lk.5:34; Jn.3:29; 2Cor.11:2-3; Eph.1:22-23; 5:22-33; Rev.19:7-14; 21:2-4; 21:9ff.; 22:17), the entire family of God assembled on the new Mount Zion in eternity (Rev.19:7; 21:2; 21:9; 22:17; cf. Heb.12:22), worshiping the Father and the Son in perfect unity forever. For this goal to be achieved required "history", the perfect plan wherein the creation of angels and men with the ability to accept or reject God's authority through the image given to them inevitably meant the rebellion of some angels, and the necessary process of sacrifice on God's part in order to redeem from death the human beings created to resolve that rebellion (following the inevitable fall of human beings given free will).

For the perfect result which is the eternity for which we all wait breathlessly to be achieved, God would have to partake of humanity; but God partaking of humanity was the essence of the plan in the first place. We are saved by Jesus Christ so that we belong to Him for ever; but we are also saved by Jesus Christ *in order to* belong to Him forever. We are His prize of victory, the Bride He loves beyond expression, and our uniting with Him is the entire point behind creation, behind history, behind the plan of God itself (Ps.2:8; 1Cor.8:6; 15:27-28; Eph.1:20-23; Phil.2:9-11;

Col.1:16-20; Heb.12:2; cf. Rom.11:36; 1Cor.8:5; 11:12). As our context verse affirms, we exist "for Him" having been created "by Him" – Jesus Christ being meant here rather than the Father who has authored the plan on behalf of His Son. And it is through the successful carrying out of the plan through what our Lord endured to become, in becoming, in living, in persevering, and in suffering as a true human being – spiritual death and all that preceded it – that we have been won by Him and belong to Him forever. We, His Bride, are the sons and daughters whom **He** has "led to glory", that is, to eternal life and all of the glorious blessings in the new heavens and new earth to come.

This is what qualifies our Savior to claim the glorious and meritorious title of "the Captain of our salvation". Whether one translates the Greek word *archegon* (from *arch-* "leader", and *ag-* "lead") as "pioneer" (NIV), "founder" (ESV), "source" (CSB), "originator" (NASB20), "author" (NASB95), "leader" (DBY) or, as here, "Captain" (also KJV), our Lord's primacy in achieving **our** salvation and in rescuing **us** in order to be His forever is the fundamental point behind this appellation. The humanity of Jesus Christ and our planned and achieved uniting with Him as a result of His victory on the cross is the point; for it is through our Lord's wedding of Himself to us in becoming human and rescuing us by dying for us that we are now part of Him forever, sharing all that He is and has, being led to glory by Him.

(22) But you have come [not to Mount Sinai but] to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, [that is, you have come to] the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of [elect] angels in assembly [before God], (23) and to the Church of the firstborn enrolled [as its citizens] in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of justified [believers] [who have now] completed [their tasks], (24) and to Jesus, the Mediator of a better covenant, and to sprinkled blood (i.e., the work of Christ in bearing our sins) which speaks [far] more powerfully than that of Abel[’s sacrifice].
Hebrews 12:22-24

"Let us rejoice and be jubilant, and let us give glory to Him, because the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has prepared herself."
Revelation 19:7

Verse Eleven

For both the One who sanctifies and those who are sanctified belong to One [Father], and for this reason [Christ] is not ashamed to call them His brothers.
Hebrews 2:11

Holiness: Sanctification is a Latin derived word, holiness a Germanic one. The Greek root here is *hag-* (cf. the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul and hagiography, biographies of "saints"). Saint and sanctification, hallow and hallowed, holy and holiness are thus all related to the same basic concept in Greek and in the Bible as a whole, meaning essentially the **separation** of God and those who belong to Him from all that is evil, wrong, corrupt and rebellious.

"Our Father, the One in Heaven, let your Name be **sanctified**."
Matthew 6:9 (Lk.11:12)

The "Lord's prayer", as we have mentioned before, directs us to pray for things which we know are already a certainty: God has already provided for us our daily bread; God has already provided for the forgiveness of our sins by the blood of Christ (as long as we forgive others); God has already provided for our deliverance from the evil one, his minions and machinations (if we but follow God instead). And nothing can stop His "kingdom from coming"; and nothing can stop His "will from being done". So we pray for these things more to remind ourselves of these blessed realities than we do to ask for them to happen – because nothing can stop them from happening.

The same is true of our Father's "Name". The "Name" represents the Person (cf. Matt.28:19, where we are said to be "baptized into the *Name*" of the Trinity, that is, made one with the Father and the Spirit in Jesus Christ). And beyond all argument God's reputation cannot be sullied. If there is any lack of "hallowing" His Name/Person/reputation, it is only during the short time of angelic and human history where creature free will has resulted in this sort of lack of respect for the Creator on the part of so many – for which retribution will eventually come (Jude 1:15). That too is, of course, all part of the plan of God. The working out of the plan will, in the end, prove that everything God has done has been good and righteous and right – all lies are in the process of being refuted as it will be revealed at the last judgment when "the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts" (1Cor.4:5 NKJV). Until then, to preserve the integrity of His holiness, His sanctification, God the Father has temporarily moved the place of His throne to the third heaven – in order to allow history, the conflict in which we are all intimately involved, to run its predetermined course with the purpose of sifting out the wheat from the chaff, allowing each of His creatures to determine their eternal futures of their own image of God free will.²¹

"His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."
Luke 3:17 NKJV

On that glorious day to come, when the present heavens and the present earth are destroyed, with all evil thoroughly cleansed by fire, there will be only holiness in the new heavens and on the new earth. Nothing unclean will ever enter into the gates of New Jerusalem (Rev.21:27).

"Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God Almighty,
Who was and is and is to come!"
Revelation 4:8 NKJV

Until that time, the process of "sanctification", the mechanism of the plan of God, is moving forward, one saved believer at a time. For we are all "sanctified", "hallowed", "made holy" when we believe in Jesus Christ, the One who "sanctifies" us *through the truth*.

²¹ Earth was the original "headquarters" of the Father prior to the rebellion of Satan. See SR 1: Satan's Rebellion and Fall from Grace, section II, "Angelic Pre-History".

(14) "I have given them Your word, and the world hated them, because they are not of the world just as I am not of the world. (15) I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one. (16) For they are not of the world just as I am not of the world. (17) So make them *holy* (i.e., "sanctified") *by means of Your truth* – Your Word is *truth*. (18) And just as you sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. (19) I am *consecrating* (i.e., "sanctifying") Myself for their sake, so that they too may be made *holy* (i.e., "be sanctified") through truth."
John 17:14-19

Brothers: It should go without saying that the Greek word used here, *adelphoi*, "brothers", refers to female as well as male believers in Christ, it being a feature of Greek syntax to use the masculine for mixed groups while the feminine is reserved for pure, unmixed feminine groups.

For both the One who Sanctifies and those who are Sanctified Belong to One [Father]: The Greek conjunction *gar* translated "for" explains why our Lord is pleased to call us "His brothers and sisters": Jesus could only be the Captain of our salvation, could only come into the world and save us from our sins, could only complete the plan of God by becoming one of us. Through our Lord's great sacrifice in becoming human and bearing our sins in His human body, we now belong to the Father as He does because we belong to Him, having been brought into the realm of holiness, sanctified, by His blood. Thus we believers are brothers and sisters of our "big Brother", Jesus Christ, and as such, beloved by the One who bought, cleansed and sanctified us – members now of the family of God the Father, part of the Church, the Body, the Bride of Christ. We belong to Jesus Christ completely now, the hold of the secular, temporary, sinful world over us having been irreparably broken, being in principle holy as He is holy.

But just as He who has called you is holy, you too should be entirely holy in your behavior. For the scripture says: "Be holy, because I am holy".
1st Peter 1:16 (see also Lev.11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7)

As can be inferred from our passage, sanctification, like salvation, is also positional, experiential, and ultimate. In terms of our position at salvation, we are sanctified by the blood of Christ when we put our faith in Jesus, removed from the realm of the profane and brought into the realm of the holy in the sovereignty of God – but we are still in this world and are still living out our lives in these maculate and sinful bodies. For that reason scripture, the Spirit and our Lord Jesus Christ call us to progress in our sanctification, to be holy more and more day by day, ever more sanctified by the truth of the Word of God in all we think and do and say (Jn.17:14-19).

Sanctification, therefore, in its experiential phase, is a virtual synonym for spiritual growth, since as we grow we will inevitably become more like our Savior in our behavior and less like unbelievers. We will never achieve perfection this side of heaven, of course, but we must never underestimate the importance of "pursuing sanctification" (Heb.12:14). When we rise in resurrection as part of the perfect Bride of Christ, chaste and without spot or blemish (Eph.5:27), at that point we will be ultimately sanctified, never again subject to anything sinful or unholy.

Sanctification in its three aspects is, therefore, an essential outline of the plan of God for believers: our entrance into the family of God (positional), our perseverance in spiritual growth,

progress and production while still in this world (experiential), and our resurrection and reward as part of the perfect Bride of Christ when our Lord returns (ultimate). Sanctification is thus also an essential outline of the plan of God as a whole, the process by which our heavenly Father is drawing out a people for Himself from the present world to belong to Him and to His Son our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for all eternity.

(11) And this (i.e., sinners) is [exactly] what some of you were – but you were washed [clean], but you were *made holy* (i.e., sanctified), but you were made righteous by [faith in] the Person (lit., Name) of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God.
1st Corinthians 6:11

Washing refers to our redemption, the washing away of our sins by the blood of Christ which has ransomed us from death; being made righteous refers to our justification by that same sacrifice, being considered blameless in God's eyes on account of our faith in His Son; being made holy, sanctified, refers to our removal from this temporary and evil world unto a perfect and eternal one wherein we shall on that great day to come live in sinless bliss with our Savior and one another for all eternity, possessing that blessing by position now, striving to honor our Lord in living up to the standard of sanctification He has set for us, and looking forward in great expectation for that day when we will indeed be "holy as I am holy" forevermore, that wonderful day when we must appear before the "Captain of our salvation" and experience fully the "glory" to which He has led us and bought for us with His victorious death on our behalf: the consummation of the plan of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

(15) [Jesus Christ] is the exact image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
(16) Everything in the heavens and on the earth was created by Him, things invisible as well as those visible – whether thrones, authorities, rulers or powers, everything was created through Him and for Him. (17) And He Himself is before everything, and everything subsists in Him. (18) And He Himself is the Head of the Body, [that is,] the Church. [Even] He who is [its] Ruler, the Firstborn from the dead, [thus resurrected] to the purpose that He Himself might become the One who occupies the first place in all things. (19) For it was [God's] good pleasure for the fulfillment [of His plan] to reside entirely in [Christ], (20) and so through Him to reconcile everything to Himself, having made peace through Him, through the blood of His cross, whether things on earth, or things in heaven.
Colossians 1:15-20

Verse Twelve through Thirteen

(12) As *He* says: "I will proclaim Your name to My brothers. In the midst of the assembly I shall praise you" (Ps.22:22). (13) and elsewhere, "I (i.e., *we* responding to Him) [too] shall put My confidence in Him, [the Father]" (Is.8:17). and elsewhere, "Behold, I and the children (i.e., *us* together with Him) whom God has given Me" (Is.8:18).
Hebrews 2:12-13

All three of the Old Testament quotations above (from Ps.22:22; Is.8:17; and Is.8:18) constitute

instances of the Holy Spirit prophetically foreshadowing the coming of God the Son into the world as a human being, the Messiah, to win us for Himself. In the first quote (from Ps.22:22), we see Jesus in His capacity as our Captain, the Head of the Church, the Bride of Him to whom we belong, proclaiming the Father to us who are His prize, something He did throughout the first advent (e.g., Jn.1:18; 17:26) and will do for all eternity whenever the family of God gathers to praise the Father on New Jerusalem's mount Zion. And as the passage quoted affirms, Jesus will join us in praising the Father to His glory for bringing completion to the perfect plan whereby we are one (cf. 1Cor.15:28). In the second Old testament passage quoted (Is.8:17), believers are seen to be following our Lord's example through placing our faith, trust, belief, obedience and confidence in the Father just as He did. After we do so, in the third Old testament passage quoted (Is.8:18), we find our Savior embracing us, His Church, formally claiming us as one with Him – and that is the message which this entire verse loudly proclaims: we are His brothers and sisters because He became like us and saved us so that we with Him can offer acceptable praise to the Father (Ps.22:22); we respond to Him and His example and belong to Him as a result (Is.8:17); as a result of His sacrifice and our response, we belong to Him completely forever and ever as His prize, "the children whom God has given Me" (Is.8:18).

(48) But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" (49) And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! (50) For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."
Matthew 12:48-50 NKJV

Thus our Savior is pleased to call us His brothers as scripture prophesied by telling us of His love for us as His Bride (Ps.22:22), relating our trust in Him as those who now belong to Him (Is.8:17), and describing us as being one together forever (Is.8:18), the perfect Bride of Christ with our perfect Husband.

(25) Husbands, love your wives as also Christ loved His Church and gave Himself over [to death] on her behalf, (26) so that He might *sanctify* her, having purified her by the washing of the water [of truth] in [His] *Word*. (27), so that He might Himself [and] for Himself present His Church in glory, without spot or blemish, but so that she might [instead] be *holy* (i.e., "sanctified") and without blame.
Ephesians 5:25-27

The completion the Bride (and the final element of the family of God, the Friends of the Bride or millennial believers) is the ultimate goal and purpose of the plan of God, accomplished by means of the cross whereby we who return to the Lord are sanctified when we believe the truth of the gospel (and ultimately sanctified at the resurrection, being progressively sanctified in between by our response to the truth). The world, the present cosmos, is evil, but in the perfect plan of God we who are being sanctified – made holy – are being called out of this evil environment into the realm of holiness.

(12) Giving thanks to the Father who has rendered you sufficient to receive your share in the inheritance of the saints in the light [of eternity], [the very One] (13) who rescued us from the power of darkness and delivered us into the Kingdom of His beloved Son.

Colossians 1:12-13

And while we understand this separation from evil to be now only positionally true, and while we see this victory over evil happening only gradually at present, individual believers saved one at a time, individual believers making spiritual advances one at a time, nevertheless the end result of the plan of God is blessedly inevitable: the coming down of New Jerusalem to the new earth under the new heavens wherein "only righteousness dwells" (2Pet.3:13; Rev.21:1-8). At that time, when the plan has completely run its course, there will be only holiness, peace, righteousness, light and joy and life eternal – the ultimate fulfillment of that which we pray for every single day.

(9) "Our Father, the One in heaven,

Let your Name be regarded as holy ("sanctified" with all evil removed from His presence; cf. Rev.21:27; 22:13-15),

(10) Let your Kingdom come (i.e., down to earth: Rev.21:3; cf. Rev.11:15),

Let your will be done as it is in heaven (i.e., "now") so also on earth (i.e., "then")."

Matthew 6:9-10

Verse Fourteen through Fifteen

(14) Therefore since "these children" (i.e., believers given to Christ by the Father: v.13) are flesh and blood, [Christ] took on the same [flesh and blood] in a very similar fashion (i.e., not identical only in that He was virgin born and so without sin), in order that through His death He might put an end to the one possessing the power of death, that is, the devil, (15) and might reconcile [to God] those who were subject to being slaves their whole lives long by their fear of death.

Hebrews 2:14-15

Therefore: I.e., since the Father has initiated the plan to produce for His Son the Church, the assembly of brother and sister believers who constitute the Bride of Christ, Jesus had to become human to fulfill that plan.

These Children: I.e., the Church, believers given to Christ by the Father (Heb.2:13).

Flesh and Blood: This refers to the physical part of our dichotomous makeup. Every human being also has a human spirit which is created within us at the point of our first breath at physical birth (e.g., Gen.2:7; Job 33:4; Eccl.12:17; Is.57:16; Zech.12:1; Acts 17:25; Heb.1:6; 10:5; 10:7).²² But unlike the angels, the "home" or "house" we have for that human spirit is at present a very fragile one. For while at the resurrection our body will be eternal and indestructible (Rom.6:9; 1Cor.15:48-58; 1Jn.3:2; Rev.1:18), after the expulsion of mankind from Eden human beings as we all realize from a very early age are subject to physical death. That is *the* problem of our present existence, the "ultimate concern" as it has been called in theology, the fundamental fact which ought to lead every human being to seek out God, the only One who can deliver us

²² See BB 3A: Anthropology, section II.4, "The Dichotomy of Man".

from physical death as well as from the sin and condemnation which produce it and follow it respectively.²³

(24) "The God who made the world and everything in it, He is Lord of heaven and earth. He does not dwell in man-made temples, (25) nor is he waited on by human hands, as if He needed anything from us. He is the One who gives us all life and breath and everything else. (26) From one man he created all the nations of mankind – that they should come to inhabit the whole face of the earth. He fixed and determined the specific times and extent of their habitations, (27) to the end that they should seek out this God, that they might go in search of Him and so might find Him – for He is not far off from any one of us. (28) 'For in Him we live and move and exist', as also some of your own poets have said: 'For we are also His progeny'. (29) Since then we are God's progeny, we ought not to think that deity is similar to [something made of] gold or silver or stone, fashioned by human skill and imagination. (30) So having overlooked the [former] times of ignorance, God now commands all men everywhere to repent. (31) For He has appointed a day on which He is going to judge the world in righteousness through the Man He has ordained, having given proof of this to all through having raised Him from the dead."

Acts 17:24-31

As readers of this ministry are well aware, viewed from the standpoint of the progression of the plan of God, mankind was created in the first place to resolve the problem brought on by the devil's rebellion, replacing him and his followers one for one so as to repair the gap in the family of God produced by his secession.²⁴ Satan thought to forestall that process by tempting our first parents into sin, but in the wisdom of God this event was not only foreseen – it was actually necessary. God in His inimitable mercy provided a gracious Substitute to die in place of sinful mankind and has opened a door for repentance and reconciliation for all who wish to come back to Him, to become His sons and daughters, to become "brothers and sisters" to the One who died for them, who died for us all. In so doing, God demonstrated beyond all argument that the devil's slanders against Him were nothing but lies: He has always been and could not be other than completely merciful – to all who are willing to receive His mercy.

"For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn His face from you *if you return to Him.*"

2nd Chronicles 30:9b NKJV

The world we see around us is filled with noise and churn, but below the superficial level of life the real battle which is presently raging has everything to do with what is going on in the hearts of human beings, turning to the Lord to be saved from death and damnation through faith in Jesus Christ – or not; following the Lord ever more diligently day by day in spiritual growth to

²³ E.g., P. Tillich, *The Dynamics of Faith* (1957b) *passim*.

²⁴ See BB 2B: Eschatology, section 1, "God's Plan for Human History", and BB 3A: Anthropology, section I, "The Purpose of Man".

glorify Jesus Christ through the rewards we are winning as believers – or not. Everything else is, in the end, of no moment except as it affects these primary decisions for which we have all been placed here on earth in these temporary bodies, mere "flesh and blood" that cannot endure, to wait – in the case of believers – for that glorious day when they take on immortality.

(22) For we know that the whole creation has been experiencing intense pain and agony right up until this present time. (23) And not only the created world, but we too who have received the Holy Spirit as a foretaste [of the good things to come] agonize within ourselves as we eagerly await our adoption, that is, the redemption of our body (i.e. resurrection). (24) This is the hope with which we were saved.
Romans 8:22-24a

(50) But I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (i.e., live in eternity with the Lord), nor can corruption inherit incorruption (i.e., we need the resurrection to live forever). (51) Behold, I tell you a mystery: not all of us will fall asleep, but all of us will be changed (52) in [that] moment of time, in the blink of an eye, at the final trumpet blast. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will rise incorruptible, and we (i.e., believers still alive) too will be changed [at that time (i.e., the Lord's Second Advent return)]. (53) For this corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortality must put on immortality (i.e., in order to live forever with our Lord). (54) And when this corruptible [body] puts on incorruption and this mortal [body] puts on immortality, then will be fulfilled this prophecy which has been written: "Death has been swallowed up in victory. (55) Where is your victory, O death? Where is your stinger, O death?" (56) Now the stinger of death is the sin [nature] (i.e., it produces our sin), and the power of sin is the Law (i.e., it reveals our sin). But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!
1st Corinthians 15:50-57

Christ took on the same Flesh and Blood: Jesus Christ is God, coequal, coeternal, and consubstantial with the Father and the Spirit. He had no necessity to take on a human nature, but He did so to fulfill the Father's plan in the power of the Spirit. He did so out of love for us.

"Greater love has no one than this, than that he lay down his life for his friends."
John 15:13

The human body that our Lord took on, the human nature, body and spirit, that He accepted as absolutely necessary to save us by bearing our sins, is genuine in every way. Jesus Christ is absolutely unique: the only member of the Trinity who possesses a human nature; the only human being who possesses a divine nature. Jesus Christ is the God-man.

. . . [Israelites] who are [descendants of] the patriarchs and from whom is the Christ, as far as *flesh[ly descent]* is concerned, the [very] One who is **God** over all [things], blessed forever. Amen!
Romans 9:5

Just as Jesus Christ is "God over all", true deity in every way, so also He is the Messiah, Christ,

born of the seed of Abraham as a true, genuine human being. The fact of His deity does not in any way diminish the genuineness of His humanity; the fact of His taking on true humanity did not in any way diminish His deity – which was impossible. For our purposes here, the important thing to take away is that Jesus Christ is human just as we are human, that His human body was absolutely human in every way ours is, with one exception: our Lord did not have a sin nature (Is.53:9; Heb.4:15; 7:26; 1Pet2:22; 1Jn.3:5).

"Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?"
John 8:46a NIV

He committed no sin, nor was any guile found in His mouth.
1st Peter 2:22

[The Father] made Him who had no [personal] experience of sinning [to be] sin (i.e., a sin offering) for us, so that we might have God's righteousness in Him.
2nd Corinthians 5:21

As the last verse here explains, only by being sinless could our Lord be qualified in the justice of God to be our sin-bearer: only a perfect Substitute was acceptable (Heb.9:14; 1Pet.1:19). This is one major reason why only Jesus Christ could ever bear the sins of the world: He is the only One ever born of woman who was born without sin and who never committed sin of any kind. Adam and Eve were created sinless, but fell into sin. Every other human being born of their seed is born in sin, born with a "sin nature", a fact that renders us spiritually dead to God at birth and also guarantees that we will sin as long as we live (Ps.51:5; Job 15:14-16; Matt.26:41; Eph.21:3; Rom.5:19; 7:17-20; Gal.5:16-17).²⁵

When they sin against You – for there is no man who does not sin . . .
1st Kings 8:46a (2Chron.6:36a)

For there is no man on earth who is [so] righteous that he [always] does what is good and [never] sins.
Ecclesiastes 7:20

What then? Do we [Israelites] have an advantage? Not at all. For we have already brought forth the charge that both Jews and gentiles, all [of us], are under sin's control.
Romans 3:9

For all sin and fall short of God's glory.
Romans 3:23

Jesus Christ is the only exception, being sinless from birth, brought into this world by the Father

²⁵ See BB 3B, Hamartiology, section I.2, "The Sin Nature".

through the Spirit in an absolutely unique way: the virgin birth.²⁶

Therefore the Lord will Himself give you a sign. Behold, the virgin will conceive and will give birth to a Son, and you shall call His Name "Immanuel" (i.e., "God is with us").
Isaiah 7:14

"Behold, the virgin will conceive and will bear a Son, and they will call His Name 'Immanuel', which is translated 'God is with us' ".
Matthew 1:23

The virgin birth was absolutely essential, because this was the only way in which our Lord could come into the world as a true human being *and* not have a sin nature as a result of normal procreation – because the sin nature is passed down through the male line.²⁷

So just as through one man (i.e., Adam whose antitype is Christ) sin came into the world and, through sin, death, and thus (i.e., Adam physically passing on his sin nature resulting in universal spiritual death) death spread to all mankind – for [obviously] everyone sins (i.e., resultant universal sinning proves universal spiritual death), . . .
Romans 5:12

Therefore since death [came] through a man (i.e., the first Adam), resurrection of the dead also [has and had to come] through a Man (i.e., Jesus Christ, the Last Adam). For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.
1st Corinthians 15:21-22

Only Jesus Christ could be born sinless – and only He could have remained sinless throughout His entire life (as indeed He did) in order to be the perfect, acceptable Substitute to bear our sins. To suggest that God is unfair in that the rest of us were born spiritually dead and in need of the salvation Jesus would provide is to ignore the first three chapters of the book of Genesis: Adam and Eve fell into sin even though they were created sinless . . . and all of the rest of us would have done exactly the same thing eventually if not sooner. It is a mark of the Father's great mercy that the rest of us do *not* have to repeat the garden of Eden, because through the ineffably gracious Gift of Jesus Christ we are given something much better: resurrection in the far greater paradise of New Jerusalem from which falling is impossible, seeing and enjoying our Lord Jesus and our heavenly Father face to face in bliss for all eternity. That is the promise God has made available to all, but only believers receive it.

There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.
Revelation 22:5 NKJV

²⁶ See BB 4A: Christology, section I.5.f, "The Incarnation and Virgin Birth".

²⁷ See BB 3B, Hamartiology, section I.1, "The Three Aspects of Death".

To provide this wonderful eternity, our Lord had to die for the sins of the entire world. And to do that, He had to be perfectly sinless. He had thus to maintain His perfection throughout His earthly life. He had to be the perfect son, the perfect sibling, the perfect citizen. And He had to engage in the perfect course of preparation in order to carry out the perfect ministry before the cross, in order to negotiate the trials that preceded it, and in order to endure judgment for the sins of the entire world when the darkness fell on Calvary. And Jesus had to do all this *without* being aided by His deity in order for His experience to be truly human so that His sacrifice would be acceptable.

(5) You too should have this attitude which Christ Jesus had. (6) Since He already existed in the very form of God, equality with God was [certainly] not something He thought He had to grasp for. (7) Yet in spite of this [co-equal divinity He already possessed], He deprived Himself of His status and took on the form of a slave, [and was] born in the likeness of men. (8) He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even [His] death on [the] cross [for us all].

Philippians 2:5-8

Jesus now resides at the Father's right hand in the third heaven bathed in the glory which is rightfully His by virtue of being God and also by virtue of winning the victory upon which the entire plan of God has been based. During His first advent, however, our Lord had to accomplish everything He accomplished without glory and without the help of His deity. He had to do all that He did by fighting the same fight we fight every day – only He did so absolutely perfectly at every point and without ever failing one single time. Our Lord's "sharing in flesh and blood" was a great sacrifice and entailed an even greater one, namely, His spiritual death for us on the cross which was the purpose of Him taking on a human body; it was and is awesome and marvelous in the extreme . . . and our salvation depended upon it.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that although He was rich (i.e., divine), He made Himself poor (i.e., human and under the restraints of *kenosis*), in order that you might become rich (i.e., have eternal life) through His impoverishment (i.e., humble life and death on the cross for us all).

2nd Corinthians 8:9

Through Death He Put an End to the One Possessing the Power of Death: The death through which our Savior saved us is His spiritual death – *not* the physical death that occurred when He voluntarily exhaled His human spirit (Matt.27:50; Mk.15:37; Lk.23:46; cf. Jn.10:17-18). The latter happened only after the great victory of the plan of God had been completed, after, that is, our Lord had died in the darkness for all of our sins, having paid the entire price of fiery judgment for each and every one.

(28) After [all] this (i.e., His physical suffering *and* His spiritual death for the sins of the world), since Jesus knew that *everything had now been accomplished* in order for the [prophecy of salvation found in] scripture to be fulfilled, He said, "I am thirsty". (29) Now a jar of wine-vinegar lay there, so they placed a sponge full of the wine-vinegar on a hyssop [stalk] and brought it to His mouth. (30) So when He had taken the wine-vinegar, Jesus said, "*It* (i.e., salvation) *has [now] been accomplished!*", and having thrown back

His head, *He gave up His spirit.*

John 19:28-30

Atonement for sin was what He had accomplished, the complete propitiation of the justice of God in the judgment of every single human sin of all time which was necessary for any of us to be saved. That was the accomplishment, that was the victory, that was the rock of foundation of the entire plan of God carried out, won and laid down by the Rock Himself, the only One who could do so as the unique God-man. God cannot suffer; God cannot die; God cannot become a sacrifice for sin or atone for sin or indeed in His perfect holiness have any direct contact with sin. Only a human being, a perfect human being, could possibly fulfill the role of becoming our sin-bearer. As sinful human beings, absent intervention by God on our behalf, we were destined to face the "wrath to come" and the eternal damnation final judgment inevitably entailed (1Thes.1:10; cf. Matt.3:7; Lk.3:7). But the indescribably good news of the gospel is that Jesus incurred this judgment for us, bearing all of our sins in His own body on the cross, being judged for everything we have done (Matt.26:26; Mk.14:22; Lk.22:19; Jn.6:51-59; 1Cor.10:16-17; 11:23-25; 2Cor.5:21; Eph.2:14-16; Col.2:9; Heb.7:27; 10:5-10; 1Pet.2:24).

(21) You were once alienated from God – your very thoughts were hostile towards Him and your deeds were evil. (22) Yet God has now made peace with you *through the death of Christ in His physical body* so that you may stand before Him as holy, without blemish and free from accusation.

Colossians 1:21-22

The one described in our context of Hebrews 2:14 as possessing the "power of death" is, of course, Satan. This is a frequently misunderstood phrase, however. What we have here is a "subjective genitive", meaning that death *confers* the power in question rather than the power being the ability to put to death. In other words, it is the fact of universal human mortality following our expulsion from Eden that has given the devil his leverage. He has no power to put any of us to death absent the Lord's acquiescence (which for believers only occurs in the situation of the "sin unto death": 1Cor.5:5; 1Tim.1:20; 1Jn.5:16).²⁸ What Satan *does* possess, however, is opportunity to manipulate humanity on account of the *fear* of death all human beings naturally possess – all, that is, who have not been saved by grace and grown spiritually to the point of being fully confident of the life to come.

This is explained in verse 15 when Paul describes humanity before the cross as "subject to being slaves their whole lives long by their fear of death". If there had been no gracious intervention by God after the fall, the devil's rule over mankind would have been absolute. Rightly do human beings fear death because death is the end of everything – for those who have no hope of eternal life.

(7) Surely, no one can redeem a man[*'s* life from God's hand], no one can pay a ransom to God for him. (8) For the redemption price of a life is too precious for Him to relent forever, (9) that one should live on forever, and not see corruption. (10) For everyone

²⁸ See BB 3B, Hamartiology, section IV.6, "Apostasy and the Sin unto Death".

sees that [even] the wise die. They [too] perish along with fools and those who lack common sense, and they leave their wealth behind to others.
Psalm 49:7-10

What man can live and not see death, or save himself from the power of the grave?
Psalm 89:48 NIV

(15) Then I said to myself, "The fate of the fool will overtake me also. What then do I gain by being wise?" I said to myself, "This too is meaningless." (16) For the wise, like the fool, will not be long remembered; the days have already come when both have been forgotten. Like the fool, the wise too must die! (17) So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.
Ecclesiastes 2:15-17 NIV

The vanity of life absent hope of something after life is clear for all to see, and it is precisely this realization of our own mortality, along with the revelation of Himself God gives everyone through the majesty of His creation (Rom.1:18-20), which is meant to lead us to Him (Acts 17:23-31).²⁹ For all who respond upon recognition of our hopeless and helpless situation – without Jesus Christ – God provides the gospel, the divinely provided means for us to escape death and enter into the family of God in confident hope of eternal life.

(1) What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. (2) The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. (3) So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. (4) But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, (5) to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. (6) Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." (7) So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. (8) Formerly, when you did not know God, ***you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.***
Galatians 4:1-8 NIV

But if God the Father had not sent His Son to die for all of our sins, then we would all be in the same situation as unbelievers who have so foolishly rejected the only Way to life eternal (Jn.14:6). We would, like they are, be in perpetual "slavery", slavery to this world and to the ruler of this world, the devil (Lk.4:6; Jn.12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Eph.2:2; 1Jn.5:19). Without a Savior, the pressing necessity of death would force us all to find some accommodation – for the sake of our sanity. That drive, that force, that impetus is what ultimately lies behind all religions, all philosophies, all secular ideologies, namely, the hope of somehow escaping the inevitable destiny of all who are of woman born. And behind all of these creeds, systems and movements we find the evil one, the world system he has set in place to enslave humanity to do his will

²⁹ See BB 4B: Soteriology, section II.2, "Natural Revelation".

instead of God's will.³⁰

If there were no physical death, unbelievers would be prone to adopt the same dismissive attitude towards the devil and his substitutes for the truth as they have in rejecting Him who is the truth. But the reality of sin, death and inevitable condemnation are impossible burdens for any human being to bear – without some satisfactory resolution. In fact, of course, Jesus Christ is the only *true* solution to sin and death. But in order to ensure the genuineness of the choice we who possess the image of God all have to make in this life as to our eternal future, God has constructed the human heart in such a way so as to make it capable of hardening itself against any truth it finds uncomfortable – by accepting lies in its place. Every person who rejects God, who rejects Jesus Christ, who rejects the truth inevitably embraces one or another of Satan's lies, a fact which goes a long way towards explaining the irreconcilable difference in outlook between believers and unbelievers.

But if there had been no Savior, we would all find ourselves in the same situation as hardened unbelievers do: facing the horrible prospect of death and what lies beyond it with no hope, and in desperate need therefore of adopting some system of lies, some narcotic falsehood or other to assure us that all is well. No slavery is more cruel than that of the unbeliever destined for lake of fire relying on the lies of some religion or false secular doctrine for deliverance and doing his utmost during the few days allotted to him to achieve that deliverance by serving the devil who has concocted that lie. But if the Father had not sent the Son into the world, we too would lack all hope and be subject to that same slavery.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
1st Peter 1:3 NIV

As the context of Hebrews 2:14-15 makes quite clear, the devil's "power of death" is wholly vested in the "fear of death" felt by the majority of human beings who have opted not to trust in God for deliverance from death. Fear of death without solution (once the divine alternative has been rejected) is a powerful manipulative tool indeed. Fear of death (without God) helps the devil keep the human race in slavery. As all of Satan's "solutions" are necessarily fraught with sin, once God is rejected as the only hope for deliverance from death, the devil's alternatives become like quicksand into which his victims sink deeper at every turn (Job 18:14; Is.14:17; 61:1; Lk.4:16-21; Jn.8:34; Rm.6:16; 1Jn.3:8; Rev.1:5). But for all who are willing turn to the truth instead, God the Father offers freedom: reconciliation to Himself through the cross of Jesus Christ.

For God did not give us a Spirit producing cowardly *fear*, but [the Spirit who is the source of our] power and love and prudent behavior.
2nd Timothy 1:7 [INDEX]

Reconcile: Fear of death results in the human impetus both for temporal security (fear of

³⁰ See SR 4: Satan's World System.

scarcity and of dangers which may result in death) and for religions (which falsely promise eternal security). Much of "Satan's World System" has its rationale in and gains its power through the awareness of physical death that mankind cannot shake. For all who turn away from the only real solution, Jesus Christ, it is inevitable that all such will eventually buy into the devil's false solutions. For those who do turn to Him who is the only Way to truth and life (Jn.14:6), God provides peace.

(14) For [*Jesus*] Himself is our *peace*, for He has made both [Jews and gentiles] one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition, that is, *the enmity*, (15) by discharging the Law of the commandments and its requirements with His [own] body, so that He might re-create the two into one new Man by *making* [this] *peace*, (16) and might *reconcile* both in one Body to God through His cross, having by means of it abolished *the enmity* [between God and mankind]. (17) For when He had come (i.e., the 1st advent), He proclaimed the gospel of *peace* to you who were far away [from God], and *peace* to those who were near. (18) For it is through Him that we both have our *access* to the Father by means of one Spirit.

Ephesians 2:14-18

Reconciliation *is* peace: peace between God and mankind, with those, that is, who are willing to accept His overtures of peace in Jesus Christ.³¹ Sin constituted a barrier, the "wall of partition" which separated us from God. But Jesus Christ destroyed that barrier by bearing all sins in His body on "the tree" of the cross (1Pet.2:24). Holy God is by nature inimical to sin. But now that sin has been removed as an obstacle, God offers reconciliation to all who are willing to accept it through the gospel of peace.

[God] has erased the charge against us along with its bill of particulars (i.e., the record of our personal sins). This stood against us, but He removed it [as an obstacle] between us by nailing it to the cross (making reconciliation between the two parties possible).

Colossians 2:14

The doctrine of reconciliation explains and describes in sum the entire conflict which arose as a result of the devil's rebellion.³²

(19) For it was [God's] good pleasure for the fulfillment [of His plan] to reside entirely in [Christ], (20) and so through Him to *reconcile* everything to Himself, having made *peace* through Him, through the blood of His cross, *whether things on earth, or things in heaven*.

Colossians 1:19-20

Satan's revolt led to the creation of mankind as a substitute for the rebellious angels. Satan's temptation of mankind drawing our first parents into sin led to the gracious provision of the Gift

³¹ See BB 4A: Christology, section II.9, "Reconciliation".

³² The Satanic Rebellion series is largely concerned with these matters, *q.v.*

of Jesus Christ whereby mankind may be reconciled again to God through the forgiveness in Him of the sins which produced the enmity between God and man. And through the acceptance of this peace offer on the part of believers, the fallen angels are replaced one for one by the Church, restoring completion and harmony to God's creation through the victory won at the cross by our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, once history, the plan of God, has completely run its course.

(23) But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming (i.e., the 2nd Advent). (24) Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. (25) For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. (26) ***The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.***

1st Corinthians 15:23-26

And that He might reconcile them both (i.e., Jewish and gentile believers) to God in one body through the cross, thereby ***putting to death the enmity*** (i.e., between God and man). Ephesians 2:16 NKJV

(54) And when this corruptible [body] puts on incorruption and this mortal [body] puts on immortality, then will be fulfilled this prophecy which has been written: "***Death has been swallowed up in victory*** (Is.25:8). (55) Where is your victory, O death? Where is your stinger, O death (Hos.13:14)?" (56) Now the stinger of death is the sin [nature] (i.e., it produces our sin), and the power of sin is the Law (i.e., it reveals our sin). (57) But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

1st Corinthians 15:54-57

But [salvation] has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has ***destroyed death*** and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 2nd Timothy 1:10

"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; ***there shall be no more death***, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Revelation 21:4 NKJV

Death is the consequence of sin. By removing the barrier of enmity erected by sin, dying for every single human sin in His spiritual death on the cross, our Savior Jesus Christ has "put death to death". When we accept Him and His work in response to this "good news" of the gospel, we are reconciled to our heavenly Father.

"For this son of mine was ***dead*** and has ***come to life*** again; he was lost and has been found."

Luke 15:24 NASB20

The Spirit you received does not make you ***slaves***, so that you live in ***fear*** again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, ***Father***."

Romans 8:15 NIV

Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, **Father**."
Galatians 4:6 NIV

No longer do we live in fear of death. Death has no more purchase over our Savior (Rom.6:9), and we have absolute confidence that we will be resurrected as He was in God's due time (e.g., 1Jn.3:2). We were once enemies to God, but through the cross we have been reconciled to Him and now call Him "Father" just as our Savior who counts us His brothers and sisters does (Heb.2:11-12).

(8) But God commends His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) So how much more is it not true now, after we have been rendered righteous [through faith] in His blood, that we shall be saved from the [coming] **wrath** through Him? (10) For if when we were His **enemies** we were **reconciled** to God through the death of His Son, how much more is it not true [now], since we have been **reconciled** [to Him through Jesus' death], that we will be saved by His life? (11) And not only that, but we even exult in [our new relationship] with God [the Father] through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained this **reconciliation**.
Romans 5:8-11

As recipients of the grace of God, being reconciled to our heavenly Father through the blood of Christ, we believers experience God's peace. Peace in the New Testament is the Greek word *eirene* (from which the name Irene is derived), meaning freedom from strife and care. The New Testament writers, however, never thought of this idea of peace apart from the Hebrew synonym *shalom*. *Shalom* means more than just the absence of trouble; it means completeness, contentment, happiness, rest, and serenity as well. *Shalom*, which is used as a friendly greeting in Israel today, means to be complete, lacking nothing. We were once lost with no hope in this world, but through the cross we have been brought back into the glorious peace of God in Jesus who is our peace (Eph.2:14). That is the essence of what reconciliation means: all prior enmity between us and God on account of sin removed through Christ's sacrifice, so that we are restored to a relationship of wholeness and peace with the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit (Is.53:5; Rom.5:1-2; 8-11; 2Cor.5:18-20; Col.1:19-23; 2:14; Eph.2:14-18; 3:12; 1Tim.2:4-6; Heb.4:16; 1Pet.3:18).

"**Peace** I leave with you, My **peace** I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."
John 14:27

(1) So now that we have been justified by faith, let us take hold of the **peace** [we have] with God [the Father] through our Lord Jesus Christ, (2) through whom we have also obtained our access into this grace in which we stand, and let us boast in the hope of the glory of God (i.e., in anticipation of our resurrection).
Romans 5:1-2

Verse Sixteen

For it is certainly not angels He is helping, but He is helping the seed of Abraham (i.e., believing humanity: Rom.4:1; Gal.3:7-14).
Hebrews 2:16

In the process of Satan's revolt, some angels, one third of the total number of them in fact, of their own volition separated themselves from God.³³ The other two thirds, the elect angels, never abandoned their allegiance to the Lord. Over some no doubt very long period of time, angels made their decisions about eternity in an abundance of knowledge, with the rebel group never desiring any reconciliation with God and the loyalist group never needing it.

Mankind's situation was quite different from that of the angels. Viewed from the standpoint of the conflict the devil initiated with God, we human beings were created to resolve that revolt – by demonstrating that all of Satan's blasphemies against the Lord were utterly untrue. Had the evil one and his followers been willing to repent and return to their original status of obedient reverence to the God of the universe, contrary to Satan's apparent lies, God would have provided. That is shown to be undeniably true through the ineffably wondrous sacrifice by the Father of His own Son in order to provide that opportunity of reconciliation for sinful mankind – and by the Son's willingness to suffer spiritual death for every single human sin in order to effect it.

Behold, He does not place [unreserved] trust in His servants, but charges [even] His angels with error.
Job 4:18

Then He will say to those on His left, "Away from Me, you accursed ones, into the eternal fire [already] prepared for the devil and his angels.
Matthew 25:41

"Concerning judgment, because [the devil], the ruler of this world, has [already] been condemned."
John 16:11

Satan had assured his followers that revolting from all-powerful God was not insanely suicidal because God would have no means of restoring fullness and harmony to His creation in such a case, absent the acquiescence of the rebels. But to the fallen angels' great surprise, judgment did come (after some lengthy interval wherein the evil one and his followers held court on earth following God's removal of Himself and His faithful followers to the third heaven). That judgment came in the form of the complete blacking out of the universe and its submersion into the cosmic deep, destroying all life and depriving the cosmos of all light.

(1) Before all else, God created the heavens and the earth. (2) **But** the earth came to be ruined and despoiled – darkness lay upon the face of the abyss while God's Spirit brooded

³³ For the detailed treatment of the events covered in this section, see SR 1: Satan's Rebellion and Fall from Grace; SR 2: The Genesis Gap; and SR 3: The Purpose, Creation, and Fall of Man.

over the surface of its waters.

Genesis 1:1-2

As the devastation of the original capital of the kingdom of God encapsulated the judgment unforeseen by the evil one and his angels, so the re-creation of the universe and the restoration of the earth to a habitable condition both provided the scene for God's gracious demonstration of the justness of His verdict against the rebels as well as the venue for their replacement. Mankind would replace those lost by their own choice.

(26) Then God said, "Let us make Man in our image, according to our likeness, so that he may rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and over the beasts and over the whole earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth". (27) So God created the man in His image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (28) Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; rule over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Genesis 1:26-28 [index]

The devil lost little time in analyzing these unanticipated developments, the unfettered progress of which must soon produce a complement of humanity sufficient to replace him and his followers. Satan's counter-attack, while seemingly beyond clever, actually only played into God's hands, initiating the course of human history as we know it wherein all of the sins of now fallen mankind would have to be atoned for in order for reconciliation to occur. It is just this reconciliation, discussed under the previous verse, that the Father has provided for us through the death of His one and only dear Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. And it is the willingness that some human beings have to accept His ineffably gracious offer to return to Him which, along with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ which provided the opportunity for that reconciliation, that has demonstrated to all in heaven above and on earth below that there was never anything to the Satan's fine sounding promises but lies.

"You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

John 8:44 NIV

The angels either never needed the merciful intervention of the cross or else were not interested in accepting any such offer of peace. But we human beings *all* needed it – and some of us over the course of human history have been eagerly grateful to accept that reconciliation, that salvation, that "help" which could only come from God Himself.

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save *the lost*."

Luke 19:10 NIV

(1) And you [too were once spiritually] dead in the transgressions and sins (2) in which you then lived your life, after the fashion of this temporal world, after the pattern of the ruler who holds sway in the air [around us (i.e., the devil)], that spirit who is now at work

in those who have chosen disobedience. (3) In company with these we too all conducted our lives in the lusts of our flesh (i.e., sin nature), carrying out the will of our flesh and its desires. For we were [all thus] *children of wrath by nature* just like the rest [of the human race]. (4) But God, being rich in mercy on account of the great love He had for us (5) made us alive in Jesus Christ – even though we were dead in our transgressions: you have been saved by [His] grace.

Ephesians 2:4-5 [index]

(21) You were once *alienated* from God – your very thoughts were hostile towards Him and your deeds were evil. (22) Yet God has now made *peace* with you through the death of Christ in His physical body so that you may stand before Him as holy, without blemish and free from accusation.

Colossians 1:21-22

It is we believers whom God helps, not the angels, because we are the ones who need the help and the ones, in the case of those who believe in Christ, who have shown ourselves willing to accept it. Thus this verse puts a period with emphasis on the issue of Gnostic fascination with angels. The Gnostics have turned things exactly upside down. They wish to help God defeat angels, but the entire heavenly conflict in which we are involved is about God helping us and refuting Satan's lies in the process. This is the last direct mention of angels in the book of Hebrews until near its end (Heb.12:22 and 13:2). Having put paid to Gnosticism and put all of its participants to shame with these words (which are backed up by all that has gone before in this letter), henceforth Paul will focus upon the bigger problem of legalism in the Jerusalem church, bigger not on account of any relative danger (since both sets of false teaching are inimical in the extreme to faith), but bigger in the sense of reversion to the Law being nearly universal amongst the Christian community native to Jerusalem.

Verse Seventeen

For this reason, it was essential for Him to be like His brothers in every respect, in order for Him to be a merciful and faithful priest in matters concerning God so that He could expiate the sins of the people.

Hebrews 2:17

For This Reason: That is, in order to help human beings rather than angels is the reason why Jesus Christ, God in His own right, had to become a human being (as well as God). This amazing sacrifice was necessary in order for our Lord to bear the sins of the world. God is life and cannot die; not having a body, God cannot bear sin in His body as a sacrifice to take away that sin by paying for it. Only a genuine human being could bear sin; only one who was perfect in every way, "a lamb without spot or blemish" as the animal sacrifices which represented the cross demanded (representing Christ's sinlessness: 1Pet.1:19), could be acceptable to the Father as a sacrifice for our sins. Only by taking on a human body, living a perfect and sinless life, fulfilling all of the many requirements of the most difficult life ever lived, refusing to allow the abuse which would have discouraged and eventually killed anyone else to dissuade Him from carrying out His mission, and only by going through with it – being judged in the darkness for every single human sin of all time – could our Lord atone for our sins.

(6) "You have taken no pleasure in sacrifices and offerings, [but instead] You have pierced My ears (i.e., "given Me a body and marked Me as a voluntary Servant"; cf. Ex.21:5-6; Deut.15:16-17). You have not asked for burnt offerings or sin offerings. (7) [But] then I said, behold, I have come [into the world (i.e., as the true sacrifice)]. In the scroll of the Book it has been written about Me. (8) It is My good pleasure to do what pleases You, My God. For your Law is in My inmost parts."
Psalm 40:6-8 (cf. Heb.10:5-10)

In Every Respect: Jesus Christ was and is fully human. His human nature is identical to ours. The body He willingly took on to come into this world, and the human spirit He received at the point of physical birth, were exactly like ours – except that being virgin-born He did not have the sin nature that our first parents acquired when they sinned and then bequeathed to all of the rest of us (cf. Jn.8:46).

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin.
Hebrews 4:15 NIV

Jesus was born sinless and, despite living the most difficult life any human being has ever had to contend with, remained sinless throughout that life – not being helped by His deity (which would have invalidated His sacrifice as a true human being)³⁴, but being helped as we also can be helped, by the Holy Spirit in responding to the truth of the Word of God.

(2) And the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him (i.e., the Messiah), the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
Isaiah 11:2

(17) This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: (18) "Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations."
Matthew 12:17-18 NIV

(34) "For the One God sent speaks the words of God. For the Father does not give [Him] the Spirit in a sparing way. (35) He loves the Son and has given everything into His hand."
John 3:34-35 (cf. Jn.6:63)

(6) Since He already existed in the very form of God, equality with God was [certainly] not something He thought He had to grasp for. (7) Yet in spite of this [co-equal divinity He already possessed], He deprived Himself of His status and took on the form of a slave, [and was] born in the likeness of men. (8) He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even [His] death on [the] cross [for us all].

³⁴ See BB 4A: Christology, section 5.e, "The Hypostatic Union and Kenosis".

Philippians 2:6-8

A Merciful and Faithful Priest: This is the first mention in Hebrews of Christ's priesthood, an extremely important doctrine that will form the superstructure of most of what Paul has to say later about the replacement of the Law through Christ's victory on the cross. A priest is an individual selected by God to represent Him to human beings, a go-between, a mediator who, on account of his close relationship to God, is given His message to speak to the people of God at large.

"You, [Moses], go near and hear all that the Lord our God may say, and tell us all that the Lord our God says to you, and we will hear and do it."

Deuteronomy 5:27 (cf. Ex.20:18-19)

But every other human priest could only approach God through animal sacrifice offered for his own sins as well as for those of the people he represented (Heb.5:3; 7:27), sacrifices which merely represented the sacrifice of the cross which our perfect High Priest would personally make for us, the only sacrifice which could actually, not merely symbolically, take away our sins. Who could do this if he would? Only someone who lived a perfect life of faithfulness so as to be the perfect sacrifice. Who would do this if he could? Only someone who was merciful to a perfect degree.

(6) For not only did Christ die for us while we were helpless – He even did so at the critical time, [dying] on our behalf, ungodly though we were. (7) For scarcely will someone die on behalf of a righteous person; and perhaps someone might also risk death on behalf of a good person. (8) But God commends His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:6-8

Expiate the Sins: Expiation, also called in theology propitiation and atonement, refers to the removal of sin as an issue in the relationship between mankind and God.

Expiation/propitiation/atonement pays for our sin; redemption buys us free from our slavery to sin; reconciliation restores our relationship with God as a result – for all who willingly accept Christ's sacrifice.³⁵ The Greek word here, *ilaskomai*, means, literally, to appease, the idea being that the Father is pleased or appeased by the sacrifice of His Son for our sins on the cross: that sacrifice is deemed acceptable. This is the word/root used to translate words from the Hebrew root *caphar* from which atonement in "The Day of Atonement" is derived. This pair of roots also refers to the so-called "mercy seat" on the ark of the covenant, the gold cover flanked by cherubim upon which the blood of the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement was poured out, giving us the picture of the guardians of the Father's holiness looking down with approval on the blood shed. Expiating our sins thus means taking them away forever so that they are never again an issue or an obstacle preventing us from being saved since the Father has found the sacrifice for them acceptable. That was the ultimate point of the life – and the priesthood – of our dear Lord

³⁵ See BB 4A, section II, "The Saving Work of Jesus Christ"; and BB 4B, section III, "What it Means to be Saved".

and Savior.

So when He had taken the wine-vinegar, Jesus said, "***It*** (i.e., salvation) ***has [now] been accomplished!***" (*tetelestai*), and having thrown back His head, He gave up His spirit.
John 19:30

Verse Eighteen

For because He has suffered, He is able to help those who are being tested, since He Himself was [also] put to the test.
Hebrews 2:18

Our Lord lived a life of suffering, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Is.53:3 NKJV). He had to be entirely dedicated to the Father in order to successfully complete His mission. He could never afford to let down, not even once. He had to perfectly grow through the truth and through that truth perfectly live, not just sometimes, but at every moment. He had the same troubles and challenges as we all face, but with the added responsibility of being the perfect son, the perfect sibling, the perfect citizen and member of the Jewish community in which He lived. And our Lord had to make maximum use of every moment to prepare for the ministry of ministries He was tasked to undertake, the gauntlet of suffering which would lead up to the cross, and His spiritual death thereon wherein He would wash away the sins of the world with His blood. No one before or since has ever come close to experiencing the load our Lord had to bear throughout His entire earthly life – and no one could have, and no one would have endured what He did to get to the cross and to pay for all of humanity's sins when the darkness fell. If anyone knows about suffering, it is our Lord Jesus Christ. He was tested by the devil (Matt.4:1-11; Mk.1:12-13; Lk.4:1-13), He was tested by the difficult circumstances He encountered from the day of His birth to the moment He gave up His human spirit, and we frankly have only the slightest glimmer of a notion of what it took for Him to bear and to be judged for every single human sin of all time.

"My God, My God, why did You forsake Me?"
Psalm 22:1

Jesus was forsaken so that we might be forgiven, judged in our place to take away the sins of the world, put to death for us so that we might have eternal life.

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
1st John 4:10 NKJV

Just as our Lord's humanity was genuine in every way so also His suffering was likewise entirely genuine, and it is precisely because He was tested and tempted just as we are that He can

sympathize with us perfectly as our Mediator (Gal.3:20; 1Tim.2:5-6; Heb.8:6; 9:15:12:24)³⁶ and Intercessor (Rom.8:34; 1Jn.2:1-2)³⁷, as someone who has actually gone through the very crucible of life we are now negotiating – yet without sin – and to a degree beyond what we can even imagine, culminating in the cross where He redeemed us from our sins and delivered us from the grave, so that we might be with Him forever.

(1) "Do not let your heart be troubled. You believe in God [the Father] – believe also in Me. (2) There are many rooms in my Father's house. If there were not, I would have told you. For I am going in order to prepare a place for you. (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I shall come again and take you to Myself, so that where I am, you may be also."

John 14:1-3

Whenever we are in pain, whenever we are suffering, grieving, experiencing loss, under pressure, let us never forget that our Savior went through much worse in order that all this might be temporary (Is.52:13-15; 53:1-12; Ps.22:1-31). He knows full well the troubles we face and endure here in the devil's world. And He always stands ready to help us – as One who faced and endured the same.

"Fear not, for I am with you;
Be not dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you,
Yes, I will help you,
I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."
Isaiah 41:10 NKJV

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."
John 16:23 NKJV

For it is indeed to this purpose that you have been called (i.e., sharing in the sufferings of Christ); for Christ also died (lit., *suffered*) on your behalf, leaving you an example so that you might follow in His footsteps.
1st Peter 2:21

³⁶ See BB 4A: Christology, section I.2.d, "Christ's taking on of true humanity was necessary for Him to become our Mediator".

³⁷ See BB 4A: Christology, section I.5.o.6, "Access and Intercession".