

# **A Study of the Epistle to the Hebrews**

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## **Hebrews, Part 1**

### **Introduction**

“The epistle to the Hebrews, one of the most important books in the New Testament in that it contains some of the chief doctrines of the Christian faith, is, as well, a book of infinite logic and great beauty. To read it is to breathe the atmosphere of heaven itself. To study it is to partake of strong spiritual meat. To abide in its teachings is to be led from immaturity to maturity in the knowledge of Christian truth and Christ Himself. It is to ‘go on to perfection’.”

E. Schuyler English  
Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews

While most New Testament epistles were written to a largely Gentile audience and generally spoke of issues relating mainly to that audience, The Epistle to the Hebrews, as the name implies, was written to a Jewish audience. Though the subjects and issues that this epistle deals with pertain particularly to that audience, they also have a much broader application to the Gentile members of the Church at large.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is an apologetic work, meaning it defends the faith against apostasy. In doing so, it exalts the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and makes immensely valuable contributions to the doctrines of His Incarnation, His substitutionary death, and His priesthood. Among the other truths to which the epistle effectively contributes are those involving the relationship between the New Covenant and the Old Covenant, the interpretation of the Old Testament, and the life of faith. The Church would be incalculably poorer without the teaching of this inspired book.

Despite its unquestioned value, we know very little of its background and authorship, but that has no impact on understanding the epistle’s message. That remains timeless and relevant whatever the circumstances out of which it arose.

## **When was it written?**

Speculation about the date of the writing of Hebrews varies widely. Some believe it was written as late as AD95, but that is very unlikely. Others argue it was written before the Jewish Wars which began in AD66 and concluded with the fall of Jerusalem with the destruction of the Temple in AD70. That is much more likely because there is no mention of either the war or the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Considering the audience is Jewish and the subjects discussed the most meaningful to Jews, it would be expected that there would be some mention of such momentous events had they already occurred. Furthermore, the author seems to regard the sacrificial system as still in operation, which would not have been the case if the Temple was already destroyed. It is, therefore, assumed Hebrews was written between AD60 and AD66 and most likely late in that period.

## **Authorship.**

Many names have been suggested for the authorship of Hebrews, but the question remains unanswered. The tradition that Paul was the author has never been disproven. Many argue that the writing style, vocabulary, and internal characteristics of Hebrews rule out Paul as the author, but others argue exactly the opposite. It is clear when Hebrews is read in the Greek that the author was one with a spiritual mind clearly attuned to Paul, but some argue in subtle ways quite different. J. Vernon McGee makes a compelling argument that the author was indeed Paul. In some of the earliest manuscripts, Hebrews is included among those written by Paul. At the earliest date at which we find a collection of Paul's Epistles in circulation in the Church, the Epistle to the Hebrews was included, occupying a place either among or at the close of the Epistles to Churches. By others it was treated as an appendix to them, being set after the private letters. With still others, it found no place at all among the Apostolic writings. Paul died sometime between AD65 and AD67 which would be around the speculated time of the writing of Hebrews.

Another name with early support is that of Paul's former missionary partner, Barnabas. Some early church fathers and writers viewed Barnabas as the author, in fact, the ancient catalog of canonical books found in the Western

manuscript called *Codex Claremontanus*, the Book of Hebrews went under the name of the “Epistle of Barnabas”. In many respects, Barnabas fits the requirements for authorship of this epistle. Since he was a Levite (Acts 4:36), an interest in and knowledge of the Levitical system, such as the author of Hebrews displayed, would be natural for him. He had close ties with Paul, so resemblances in Hebrews to Paul’s thought would be naturally explained. Of course, authorship by Barnabas cannot be proved, any more than authorship by Paul can be disproved. If Hebrews was indeed authored by Barnabas, then it can claim apostolic origin since Barnabas was called an apostle in Acts 14:4 and 14).

At one time or another, the names of Clement of Rome, Luke, Silvanus, Philip the Evangelist, Priscilla, and Apollos have been offered as possible authors. In particular, the name of Apollos has found favor with some modern writers, but the evidence is tenuous.

In the end, we must conclude that we truly do not know who wrote Hebrews. Though we cannot identify the human author with certainty, its divine authority is without question.

### **Background and Setting.**

The identity of the first readers of Hebrews, like the author, is also unknown. Nevertheless, they were evidently part of a particular community that was predominately or, even more likely, exclusively Jewish. Though this has sometimes been questioned, the contents of the epistle strongly argue for it. While the ancient title “To the Hebrews” might be only a conjecture, it is a natural one when the context of the epistle is considered in its whole.

The heavy and extensive appeal to the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures would be most applicable to readers who had been brought up on them. The author’s heavy stress on Jewish prototypes and his argument against the permanence of the Levitical system make the most sense if the audience was Jewish and inclined to be swayed back to their old faith.

The early churches in Palestine and Jewish communities outside of Palestine were initially made up of mostly Jewish believers that Jesus was the Messiah. It should be understood that, at least at the beginning of the

apostolic period, these believers would often have continued practicing the religion of their fathers while attending synagogue. What we call “Christianity” today is really an extension of the Jewish faith. Everything we believe was promised to Israel, but when they rejected the King, they rejected the promised Kingdom. Eventually, those in the synagogue who did not believe Jesus was the Messiah or that His death was the ultimate sacrifice for sins would have driven the true believers out as heretics. These Christians would then form their own synagogue (churches) made up of believers. The widening breach between the Church and the synagogue made it necessary to choose between them. As the Mystery Doctrines of the Church Age were revealed during the apostolic period, the Church separated from the synagogue and came to more resemble what we know as a Christian church today.

It is essential to keep in mind that the Epistle to the Hebrews was directed to Hebrew believers who stood at the juncture of two great dispensations. The Dispensation of the Law had come to an end. The Dispensation of Grace (Church Age) was in its infancy and its doctrines were in the process of being revealed through people like Paul, John, Peter, and others. The sacrifices at the Temple which had once been so meaningful were now meaningless. What God had required before was now actually a sin for the believer to practice.

This epistle is to a specific group of Hebrew believers. To say that Christ was superior to the prophets would be especially meaningful to a Hebrew. The writer hoped to visit them in 13:23, as he had been with them before in 13:19. At the same time, he spoke of them as “brethren” in 3:1 and “beloved” in 6:9. It is clear that the letter is addressed to a definite group, a specific church, and not to Hebrew Christians generally, although it would, of course, have that broader application, as well.

As to the location of the recipients of this letter, that is also uncertain. Some argue they were a church in the Lycus Valley or an enclave of Jewish believers within the church in Rome, but there is little to support this. If Barnabas was the author, Cyprus has been suggested because Barnabas was from there, but that cannot be supported by any evidence.

The opinion that the epistle had a Palestinian destination has recently been strengthened by the observation that the polemic of the author may be best explained as directed against a sectarian form of Judaism such as that found at Qumran. In particular, the author's arguing that the wilderness experience of ancient Israel was a time of unbelief and failure can be seen as especially pointed if directed at sectarians such as those at Qumran, who idealized the wilderness sojourn. Though not everyone is equally impressed by the data purporting to link Hebrews with sectarian thought, it does add support to a Palestinian location for the epistle's readership.

But there are problems with this view, as well. For one thing, the reference to the readers receiving their knowledge of the Lord from those who originally heard Him sounds a bit more natural for readers on a mission field. In Palestine, and especially Jerusalem, many of the readers might have heard Christ in person. In addition, the reference to the readers' generosity to the poor does not sound like Jerusalem since poverty was prevalent there. If the statement of Hebrews 12:4 means that no martyrdoms had occurred in the community the writer is addressing, then a Palestinian or at least a Jerusalem locale is excluded. But the writer may only have meant that the people in his audience had not yet made such a sacrifice.

If Barnabas is the author of the epistle, one locale which might fit all the requirements is the ancient Libyan city of Cyrene in North Africa. Cyrene had been founded as a Greek colony around 630 b.c., but in the Roman period, it had a sizable and influential Jewish community. The origins of Christianity there seem to have been quite early, for the church at Antioch in Syria was founded by missionaries from Cyprus and Cyrene (Acts 11:20). The connection between Cyprus and Cyrene in that account is of interest because of Barnabas' Cypriot background. Two of the men with whom Barnabas later ministered in the Antioch church were "Simeon called Niger" and "Lucius of Cyrene" (Acts 13:1). Since Simeon's other name, Niger, means "black," he may have been from North Africa, as was his companion Lucius. Whether this Simeon was also the man called Simon who bore Jesus' cross (Luke 23:26) is unknown, but he too was from Cyrene. This latter Simon had two sons, Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21), who may have been known in the Roman church if that is where that Gospel was first published. In any case, contact between Christians of

the Libyan city of Cyrene and those in Rome and Italy is most probable. This would explain the reference to Italians in Hebrews 13:24.

If the parallels with some kind of Jewish desert sectarianism are given weight, then the fact that Cyrene stood on the fringes of a wilderness where nomadism was a way of life may also be important. The author's references to the Greek word *oikoumenē* (trans. "world" in 1:6 and 2:5) would have special meaning in Cyrene. The word was commonly used to denote the Roman Empire, and the limits of the Roman *oikoumenē* to the south were not far from Cyrene. Since it is unlikely that the impulse to withdraw from urban life and corrupted Jewish society existed only in Palestine, it would not be surprising if desert enclaves of sectarians existed also in the wilderness of Cyrenaica. Also, an ascetic Jewish sect had taken up residence on the shores of a lake near Alexandria in Egypt according to Philo.

If the form of this faith that particularly allured the recipients of this epistle was a sectarianism similar to that known at Qumran, then many of the author's appeals would have been especially pertinent. The temptation to withdraw from civilized life into a kind of wilderness experience is precisely the kind of temptation the Epistle to the Hebrews would counter so well.

The epistle shows that devotion to Levitical ritual was no longer innocent if it obscured the characteristic teaching of the Gospel. The position which rightly belonged to young and immature Christians was unsuited to those who ought to have reached maturity. Men who won praise for their faith and constancy at the beginning of a generation that was emphatically a period of transition, might well deserve blame and stand in peril of apostasy if, at the end of it, they had not moved forward.

### **What was the problem?**

The letter was written to address a problem being experienced by Jewish believers in Jesus the Messiah. The context is that they are some 30+ years after the Cross, and their Messiah (Jesus) has not returned as promised. Their non-believing, Law-practicing, Hebrew friends, relatives, and business associates, in what was then and often still is generally a very tight-knit community, are pressuring them to return to Judaism, to come back to the Law and all the Levitical sacrifices associated with it through

which they had, before the Cross, found temporary judicial forgiveness (“blamelessness” or “righteous under the Law” as Paul described it in Philippians 3:5-6).

**Phil 3:5** ...circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless

That the Jewish community often was and remains traditionally bound together by strong family and business relationships with common interests should not be thought unusual considering the persecution this race has encountered over the centuries. For any Jew to abandon the traditions of his faith would cause him or her to be subject to extreme pressure from family and friends to come back. Such pressure could often include being ostracized from the community, their business boycotted by fellow Jews, and their family rejecting them unless they repented and returned.

The arguments used against them would likely have sounded something like this, “This man Jesus promised he would return to establish the Kingdom, and yet—it has been some 30+ years since He made that promise! Where is He?” The charge would be, “This Jesus was a false Messiah. You must come back to the synagogue! Forget this liar and come back to our true faith given to us by Adonai!” That would have been strong pressure, indeed, on these Messianic Jews to abandon their faith in Christ and return to Judaism. From the content of the letter, it is obvious some in this community, perhaps most, were considering this.

We conclude the intended audience for this epistle was most likely a community in a church largely, if not exclusively, populated by Jewish believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, or what we call today “Messianic Jews”. Based on the content of the letter and the warnings it contains, we can assume there was strong pressure for the Hebrews in this church to abandon their faith in Jesus as Messiah and come back to their traditional Judaism and the Law-keeping practices associated with it.

## **In the end.**

In the final analysis, however, the exact destination of the epistle is of as little importance as the identity of its author. Regardless of who wrote it, or where it was first sent, the Christian church has rightly regarded it down through the ages as a powerfully relevant message from God, who has definitively spoken in His Son.

We have in the Epistle to the Hebrews a picture of the early Christian life as is drawn in detail nowhere else, and represents a necessary phase in the growth of the Church. The first enthusiasm and the first hope had, as we shall notice later, passed away. Dark clouds hung over the close of the apostolic age.

This epistle is essentially an apologetic, a defense of the faith, and the writer of Hebrews begins his defense in chapter one by establishing the deity and supremacy of Jesus as God. Chapter 2 is a warning against neglecting or abandoning their salvation, and they must put their trust (present tense) in the one whom they have trusted (past tense) to deliver all that He promised, both in the promise of His return and sustaining their spiritual lives. There will be a penalty to be paid if they abandon their faith and return to the Law. They will forfeit any possibility of having a vitally alive spiritual life by returning to a works system to find righteousness.

## **Context**

If we are to correctly interpret the teachings contained in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we must consider its background.

1. The intended audience for the Epistle to the Hebrews are Jews who professed faith in Christ.
2. They are of a synagogue/church whose congregation is most likely made up exclusively of Jews.
3. The epistle concerns issues directly relating to this congregation in particular but has application to all Christ-believing Jews. The intended audience is under pressure to abandon their faith in Christ and return to their traditional Jewish faith.
4. The reason for this is it has been 30+ years since the Cross and the promise of the return of Christ to establish His Kingdom, but He has not yet done so, therefore, Jesus must have been a false Messiah.



5. The teachings found in Hebrews must be interpreted in that context first and make any possible application to Gentiles based on that understanding.

Please keep the above in mind as we begin our verse-by-verse study of Hebrews.

## God's Supreme Revelation

**Heb 1:1** God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

In the opening paragraph, we are introduced to the surpassing greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ. The writer declares the Son to be the ultimate vehicle for divine revelation, implicitly contrasting Him with the prophets of old and with the angels.

In verses 1 and 2 the central assertion is that God has variously (*polymerōs kai polytropōs*, literally, “by various means and in various ways”) revealed Himself in the past. However, Old Testament prophetic revelation has now received its end-times climax through God’s Son. Even though that former revelation was highly regarded, the writer implied they must now listen most closely to the Son.

In verses 2b-4, in a series of subordinate constructions, the author presented the Son’s greatness. In 2b, the Son is the designated Heir of all things. The reference to the Son’s heirship anticipates His future reign which the writer will have much to say later. Romans tells us all Christians are joint heirs with Christ.

**Rom 8:16** The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

But the One who is both Creator and Heir is also a perfect reflection of the God who has spoken through Him. Moreover, His Word is so powerful that it sustains all He has made. Furthermore, this Person has provided purification for sins and taken His seat at the right hand of the Majesty in Heaven. It is obvious He has attained an eminence far beyond anything the angels can claim.

The writer stated facts that will be crucial to the unfolding of his argument in the rest of the epistle. He implied that God’s revelation through the Son has a definitive quality that the previous revelation lacked. Furthermore, the sacrifice for sins He made is far greater than other kinds of sacrifices, meaning the animal sacrifices of the Levitical offerings. Finally, the Son’s greatness makes preoccupation with angelic dignities entirely unnecessary.

The key point the writer is making here is: This is God’s supremely great Son; you need to listen to Him!

### **The Son Exalted Above Angels**

**Heb 1:5** For to which of the angels did He ever say:

“You are My Son,  
Today I have begotten You”?

And again:

“I will be to Him a Father,  
And He shall be to Me a Son”?

The first major unit of the body of the epistle begins at this point and extends through the dramatic appeal in 4:14-16 where the writer calls for the readers to avail themselves of the resources available to them at “the throne of grace” (4:16). The emphasis of the whole unit is on the sonship of Jesus Christ which the writer presents as a kingly sonship in accord with the Davidic Covenant.

Drawing heavily on the witness of Old Testament revelation, the writer demonstrated the uniqueness of the Son. The title of Son and the privileges it entails all elevate Him above any and all comparison with the angels. Those who see in Hebrews ties with sectarian Judaism point to the highly developed angelology of the Dead Sea sect. These verses offer an effective rebuttal against any tendency to give excessive prominence to angels.

The two questions in verse 5 show that the name Son belongs to Messiah in a sense in that it never belonged to the angels. Obviously, “Son” is the superior name that Jesus “has inherited” (v. 4). But it is clear that the special sense of this name, Son, in its kingly ramifications, is what the writer is focused on.

The quotation in verse 5a is drawn from Psalm 2:7, while the quotation in Hebrews 1:5b comes from either 2 Samuel 7:14 or 1 Chronicles 17:13.

**Ps 2:7** I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.

**2 Sam 7:14** I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son ...

**1 Chron 17:13** I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. I will not take my steadfast love from him,

Psalm 2 is an enthronement psalm in which God “adopts” the Davidic King as His “Son.” That this is what the writer to the Hebrews understood is confirmed in Hebrews 1:5a by the quotation from the Davidic Covenant. No doubt the “today” in the expression “today I have become Your Father” was understood by the author of Hebrews to refer to Messiah’s sitting at the right hand of God as mentioned in verse 3.

Of course, the Lord Jesus Christ has always been the eternal Son of God. In a collective sense, the angels are called “sons of God” in the Old Testament in Genesis 6:2 and 4 as well as Job 38:7, but the writer was thinking of the title Son in the sense of the Davidic Heir who is entitled to ask God for dominion over the whole earth (Ps. 2:8).

**Ps 2:8** Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

In this sense, the title belongs uniquely to Jesus and not to the angels.

**Heb 1:6** But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says:  
“Let all the angels of God worship Him.”

7 And of the angels He says:

“Who makes His angels spirits  
And His ministers a flame of fire.”

8 But to the Son He says:

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;  
A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.

9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;  
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You  
With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.”

The prerogatives of the One who bears this superlative title are set forth beginning with verse 6. Instead of the NIV’s “And again, when God brings His Firstborn into the world,” or “but when He again...” seen here, it would be preferable to translate it as, “and when He again brings the Firstborn into the world.” The reference is to the Second Advent when the kingly prerogatives of the Son will be fully recognized.

In a pair of contrasting quotations, the author juxtaposed the servanthood of the angels (v. 7) and the eternal dominion of the Son (vv. 8-9). In one line of Jewish thought about angels, the writer understood the statement of Psalm 104:4 “he makes his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire,” (quoted in Heb. 1:7) as suggesting that angels often blended their mutable natures with winds or fire as they performed the tasks God gave them. But in contrast with this mutability, the Son’s throne is eternal and immutable (v. 8).

The quotation found in verses 8-9 is derived from Psalm 45:6-7 which describes the final triumph of God’s messianic King.

**Ps 45:6** Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; 7 you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness, therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;

The King the psalmist described had loved righteousness and hated wickedness. This points to the holiness and obedience of Christ while He was on earth, to which reference will be repeatedly made later (Heb. 3:1-2; 5:7-8; 7:26; 9:14). And though this King deservedly enjoys a superlative joy, still He has “companions” in that joy. The reference to “companions” *metochoi* (companions, sharers, or partners) is a significant theme for the writer. Since the King has attained His joy and dominion through a life of steadfast righteousness, it might be concluded that His companions will share His experience by that same means. This inference will later become quite clear in 12:28.

**Heb 1:10** And:

“You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth,  
And the heavens are the work of Your hands.

11 They will perish, but You remain;  
And they will all grow old like a garment;

12 Like a cloak You will fold them up,  
And they will be changed.

But You are the same,  
And Your years will not fail.”

The immutability of the King-Son is further stressed by the statements now quoted from Psalm 102:25-27.

**Ps 102:25** Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. 26 They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, 27 but you are the same, and your years have no end.

A simple “and” (*kai*, NIV “He also says”) in Hebrews 1:10 links the quotation in these verses with that in Hebrews 1:8-9. Without a doubt, the author construed the words of Psalm 102 as likewise addressed to the Son. The

Son, then, is Lord and has created both the Earth and the heavens (Heb. 1:2). But even when the present creation wears out like an old garment and is exchanged for a new one, the Son will remain unchanged. The reference here, of course, is to the transformation of the heavens and Earth which will occur after the Millennium and will introduce the eternal state (2 Peter 3:10-13).

**2 Peter 3:10** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

Yet even after those cataclysmic events the Son's years will never end. This points to His personal eternity, including an eternal throne and scepter, as well as unending joy with His companions.

**Heb 1:13** But to which of the angels has He ever said:

“Sit at My right hand,

Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”?

14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

The writer drew this section to a climax with a final Old Testament quotation, one which is crucial to the entire thought of the epistle. It is taken from Psalm 110 which the author later employed in his elaboration of the Melchizedek priesthood of the Lord Jesus.

**Ps 110:1** The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.”

He cited verse 1 of the Psalm to highlight the final victory of the Son over His enemies. If the Son is to have an eternal throne (Heb. 1:8), such a victory awaits Him. But the victory is His and not the angels'. Their role, by contrast, is to serve those who will inherit salvation.

Verse 14 says of the angels they are all “ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?” “Inherit” is the Greek

*kleronomeo* and means to receive the portion assigned to one or receive an allotted portion.

“Salvation” is the word *soteria* and simply means deliverance from something, usually some threat. In the context of a believer, “salvation” is used in three tenses: past, present, and future.

- Past tense as being saved (delivered) from the fires of Hell through faith in what Christ did for us on the Cross—regeneration. Past tense salvation, as expressed in the original text, is seen as a present possession with ongoing results – you have it now and forever. We usually call this “positional sanctification” as in being identified with Christ and often expressed in Scripture as “in Christ”. (“Sanctification” means to be set apart as someone’s own possession, in this case, God’s own possession.)
- The present tense is the believer’s deliverance through life’s trials and tribulations with the temptation to sin in this life after regeneration. We usually call this “experiential sanctification”.
- The future tense is seen as the believer’s transition from this life into glorification in the presence of our Lord at death or the Rapture. We call this “ultimate sanctification”.

It should not be automatically assumed that “salvation” here refers to a believer’s past experience of regeneration. It is used here as something future. The writer doesn’t say the “angels minister to those who have salvation.” He says they minister to those who “will inherit salvation”. Both the context and the words “will inherit” suggests this is a future ministering done by the angels.

The writer of Hebrews frequently quotes from Psalms in this chapter. It is there that the term “salvation” has a well-defined sense occurring repeatedly to describe the deliverance of God’s people from the oppression of their enemies and their consequent enjoyment of God’s blessings. In the Septuagint, the Greek Bible so familiar to the writer, the word “salvation” (*sōtēria*) was used in this sense in Psalms 3:2, 8; 18:2, 35, 46, 50; 35:3; 37:39; 71:15; 118:14-15, 21; 132:16; and elsewhere. This meaning is uniquely suitable here where the Son’s own triumph over enemies has just been mentioned. Therefore what we are looking at in Hebrews 1:14 is experiential sanctification, the believer being delivered through life’s trials

and tribulations and aided by these ministering spirits (angels). The verse is looking forward to a time when God turns again to the nation Israel, and the Gentile world – after the Church has been removed from the Earth, the Tribulation.

There is no doubt that the readers were under external pressure. They had endured persecution in the past and were exhorted not to give up now (Heb. 10:32-36). Here, the writer reminded them that the final victory over all enemies belongs to God's King and that the angels serve those who are destined to share in that victory.