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Isaiah chapter 52

7 How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!' **8** Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the LORD returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. **9** Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. **10** The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

Psalm chapter 2

New International Version

1 Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? **2** The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the LORD and against his anointed, saying,

3 Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.' **4** The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. **5** He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, **6** I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.'

7 I will proclaim the LORD's decree: He said to me, 'You are my son; today I have become your father. **8** Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

9 You will break them with a rod of iron; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.'

10 Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. **11** Serve the LORD with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling. **12** Kiss his son, or he will be angry and your way will lead to your destruction, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Context Summary

Psalm 2:1–6 portrays nations arrayed in military fashion against the Lord God and His anointed King. They have plotted to throw off the Lord's control. However, their scheme causes the Lord to laugh and to defeat their evil plan. He addresses them in His wrath and terrifies them in a display of His fury. After being released by the Sanhedrin, the Jews' ruling body in the first century, Peter and John returned to a gathering of believers and reported what had transpired. Together, the believers quoted Psalm 2:6 and applied it to the risen Son of God (Acts 4:23–30).

Psalm 2:1, NIV: Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?

What does Psalm 2:1 mean? [[↑](#) [See verse text](#) [↑](#)]

This psalm starts with a rhetorical question. It's ridiculous to think that one can overpower, undermine, or escape the will of God. The psalmist is amazed that so many people, cultures, and even entire nations are united in evil intent. He

indicates that their intention is "in vain." It is doomed to fail. The following verse explains why these efforts are doomed: they're plans to overthrow God and His Anointed One (Psalm 2:2). "Anointed" is from the Hebrew term *mashiyach*, from which English derives the word "Messiah." Greek translates this as *Christos*, from which English derives the title of "Christ."

Rage and anger are sinful mankind's typical response to God. That includes hatred aimed at those who choose to obey God, instead of following the world (1 Peter 4:3–4; John 15:18–19).

Whether an individual or a nation or several nations plot against God, the plot is bound to fail. God is far too wise and too powerful to fall to puny mankind. Pharaoh and the Egyptians learned this truth the hard way. They planned to enslave God's people, the Hebrews, indefinitely. Even after God persuaded Pharaoh by ten severe plagues to release the Hebrews from slavery, Pharaoh dispatched his cavalry to pursue the Hebrews. At the Red Sea, God told Moses, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD... The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent" (Exodus 14:13–14). Then the Lord dried up the Red Sea so His people could cross (Exodus 14:21–22). But the waters returned and engulfed the pursuing Egyptian cavalry (Exodus 14:26–28). Pharaoh's plot failed miserably when he opposed the Lord.

Psalm 2:2, NIV: The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the LORD and against his anointed, saying,

What does Psalm 2:2 mean? [[↑](#) [See verse text](#) [↑](#)]

This clearly identifies the aggressors behind the evil plot mentioned before (Psalm 2:1), as well as the target of their aggression. The kings and rulers of the nations are the aggressors. The word "set" here implies deliberate preparation and arrangement. Translations such as the NASB render this as "take their stand," suggesting the aggressors' hostile intent. They gather their armies in military formation and brainstorm how to overthrow the Lord and His Anointed.

The English word "Anointed" here comes from the Hebrew term *mashiyach*. This is the origin of the word "Messiah." In Greek, the same concept is expressed with the title *Christos*, from which comes the English title "Christ." This points to

Jesus, Israel's Messiah (Acts 2:36). In Old Testament times three significant roles were inaugurated by the anointing with oil. They were the roles of prophet, priest, and king. The prophet delivered the Lord's messages to the people; the priest represented the people before the Lord; the king ruled the people on behalf of the Lord.

Jesus, the promised Messiah, is all three: prophet, priest, and king. He came to earth as the Word and declared God's message (John 1:14, 18). He is the believers' High Priest, interceding for us (Hebrews 4:14–16). And someday He will rule the earth as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 17:14; 19:16).

Psalm 2:3, NIV: Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.'

What does Psalm 2:3 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Prior verses asked, rhetorically, why the world would rebel against an all-powerful God (Psalm 2:1–2). The purpose of their rage and plotting is an attempt to throw off the authority of God and His Anointed One. The ungodly cannot stand being controlled by the supreme Ruler of the universe and His Son (Acts 4:23–28).

Of course, the evil desire to usurp God and take His place is nothing new. Before the dawn of human history, Lucifer—the Devil—attempted to elevate himself to God's throne. But his futile exercise of self-will led to his expulsion from heaven (Isaiah 14:12–15). Adam and Eve rejected God's will concerning His command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:1–6). Their rebellion resulted in their expulsion from the garden of Eden, death for them and all their descendants, and a curse on nature (Genesis 3:16–19). In the era of the Judges, desire to reject God's will and replace it with self-will brought the Israelites into bondage to their enemies. Every man did what was right in his own eyes, even if it was wrong in God's eyes (Judges 17:6).

Ephesians 2:3 indicts the world of unbelievers for choosing to pursue self-will rather than God's will. Isaiah 53:6 says we have all gone astray like sheep and turned to our own way. Indeed, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick" (Jeremiah 17:9).

Psalm 2:4, NIV: The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.

What does Psalm 2:4 mean? [[↑](#) [See verse text](#) [↑](#)]

Those who resist God's rule, His will, and His truth do so in rage, frenzy, plotting, and scheming (Psalm 2:1–3). Scripture reveals the sovereign Lord's response to the unbelieving world's desire to overthrow Him. "The nations" (Psalm 2:1) and "the kings...and the rulers" (Psalm 2:2) think of themselves as the ultimate authority. They plan together to rebel against God's will and His Word.

Even so, God "sits" in the heavens, a reference to His throne (Isaiah 6:1), from which He rules heaven and earth. From that lofty, secure vantage point, He sees the frantic, rebellious nations, and He laughs. The nations' plot is ridiculous—it is laughable. God is not intimidated by tantrums from human beings. All the power of all the nations is no match for God. Isaiah 40:15 declares: "Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales; behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust." And Isaiah 40:17 says, "All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness."

When proud mankind wanted to make a name for themselves by building a tower at Babel that reached high into the sky, Scripture says God came *down* to see it (Genesis 11:5). He then divided their common language into many languages and scattered the builders far from the construction site (Genesis 11:1–9). Similarly, according to the following verse, God will terrify the rebellious nations.

Psalm 2:5, NIV: He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,

What does Psalm 2:5 mean? [[↑](#) [See verse text](#) [↑](#)]

"The nations," meaning the cultures and people groups of a fallen world, plot to usurp God from His throne and establish themselves as the sole rulers of earth (Psalm 2:1–3). God has other plans (Psalm 2:4). In His wrath, He will speak to them and terrify them in His fury.

These words preview Revelation chapter 20, where we read that the Devil gathers the nations for battle. The armies are so numerous that they resemble the sand of the sea (Revelation 20:8). The militant nations march on "the camp of the saints and the beloved city" (Revelation 20:9). In His wrath and fury, God rains fire from heaven upon the armies and consumes them.

The wrath of God is not a pleasant subject. Naturally, most would rather hear about God's love. However, wrath is as much a part of God's character as is His love. Sin naturally angers God, and His wrath abides on all sinners who refuse to believe on His Son, who paid the penalty for sin and offers forgiveness to all who believe on Him. Scripture states: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him" (John 3:36).

Psalm 2:6, NIV: I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.'

What does Psalm 2:6 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

The unbelieving world thinks it can throw off God's truth and His will (Psalm 2:1–3). That will only earn a laugh, and wrath, from an all-powerful God (Psalm 2:4–5). The sovereign Creator of the universe will set His King—the Lord Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah—on Mount Zion, His holy hill. The book of Psalms mentions Zion thirty-nine times. David, who wrote Psalm 2, conquered Zion when it was a city of the Jebusites (2 Samuel 5:7). Later, Zion referred to the temple area in Jerusalem and eventually it became synonymous with Jerusalem. God's "holy hill" refers to the temple mount.

Someday, Jesus, God's Anointed (Acts 4:23–28), will return to earth, subdue His enemies, and rule from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:1–4; Malachi 3:1). In the angel Gabriel's address to Mary, he prophesied concerning Jesus: "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:32–33). As surely as King David ruled from Jerusalem, so King Jesus will rule from Jerusalem!

Context Summary

Psalm 2:7–9 records the words of God's Son, Israel's future King. They appropriately follow God's promise to establish His Son on the throne of David,

and to deal with rebellious nations in His wrath and fury. Faced with King Jesus' victory over His foes, the psalmist's counsel to the rebels follows in verses 10–12. Revelation 19:11–15 describes the King's outpouring of God's wrath and fury on the rebel nations during the end times.

Psalm 2:7, NIV: I will proclaim the LORD's decree: He said to me, 'You are my son; today I have become your father.

What does Psalm 2:7 mean? [[↑](#) [See verse text](#) [↑](#)]

The psalmist, David (Acts 4:25), refers to God's mention of the king's right to rule. He recalls the covenant God made with him. This is a permanent decree authorizing Davidic rule. Second Samuel 7:13 provides God's promise at the time of David's coronation. God promised: "He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." This statement connects the idea of the promised Messiah being referred to as a "Son" of God.

Further, God referred to his relationship with David's promised descendant—the One with a "kingdom forever" as a father-son relationship. He said, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son" (2 Samuel 7:13–14). The covenant relationship between God and King David finds a greater fulfillment in the relationship of Father-Son that exists between God and His Son, the Messiah. John 3:16 emphasizes this relationship by stating, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son..."

Psalm 2:8, NIV: Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

What does Psalm 2:8 mean? [[↑](#) [See verse text](#) [↑](#)]

Traditionally, a father would provide an inheritance for his son, payable upon the father's death. In the parable of the prodigal son, the prodigal asked his father for the inheritance in advance. In that case, it was a selfish request that sprang from a wrong motive (Luke 15:11–13). God, on the other hand, invites David to ask for his inheritance, including all the nations and all of the earth.

Although David's kingdom was sizeable, the fulfillment of this promise awaits Messiah's kingdom that follows His return to earth (Revelation 19:11; 20:4).

Isaiah 9:7 points to the vast kingdom God's eternal Son will possess. This prophecy reads: "Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this."

Zechariah 2:11 anticipates Messiah's possession of the nations by proclaiming: "And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you."

Psalm 2:9, NIV: You will break them with a rod of iron; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.'

What does Psalm 2:9 mean? [[↑](#) [See verse text](#) [↑](#)]

This verse predicts that the Lord's Anointed will smash the rebellious nations when He returns to earth to establish His kingdom (Revelation 19:11; 20:4). Not one unrighteous person will be left to enter the kingdom (Titus 3:4–7). He will use a rod of iron to shatter the rebels just as a potter smashes a vessel into pieces.

The Hebrew word for "rod" is *sē'bet*, often applied to a shepherd's crook. At other times it refers to a scepter. Reportedly, Pharaoh used his scepter to smash vessels that represented rebellious nations or rebellious cities in his empire. Revelation 19:15 unveils what happens to the rebellious nations when Jesus returns to earth. The verse declares: "From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron."

Psalm 89:22–26 predicts the Messiah's conquest and rule: "The enemy shall not outwit him; the wicked shall not humble him. I will crush his foes before him and strike down those that hate him. My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers. He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.'"

Context Summary

Psalm 2:10–12 closes the song by urging kings and rulers of the earth to make a wise decision. The psalmist counsels them to change their rebellious attitude and come to friendly terms with the Lord's anointed Son. Doing so will avert the Son's anger and avoid eternal punishment. Also, coming to friendly terms with God's Son will provide refuge and blessing. This conveys a message like that of John the Baptist. He urged everyone in Israel to repent in preparation for the arrival of Messiah and His kingdom (Matthew 3:1–3; John 1:8). Jesus invited those who heard Him to repent and believe on Him (Matthew 4:17; 11:28; Luke 5:32; 13:3, 34). He said no one can enter the kingdom without being born again (John 3:3). The apostles Peter and Paul, too, urged those who heard them preach to turn to Jesus for forgiveness (Acts 2:38–39; 17:30–31; Romans 10:1–13).

Psalm 2:10, NIV: Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth.

What does Psalm 2:10 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

The psalmist, David (Acts 4:25), advises the kings to be wise, and he issues a warning to the rulers. It is unwise to oppose God considering His ability to execute His wrath on all who refuse to be warned. The idea of opposing God and defying His truth is laughable (Psalm 2:1–6). Those who oppose God and His Anointed One will face utter destruction (Psalm 2:7–9).

Even without the return of Messiah to rule the world (Revelation 19:11; 20:4), there are biblical examples of God humiliating those who arrogantly defy Him. Two Babylonian kings learned firsthand that God is not to be trifled with. In a display of his inflated ego, King Nebuchadnezzar erected a 90-foot-tall golden image on the plain of Dura. He commanded everyone to fall down at the sound of music and worship the image (Daniel 3:1–7). Later, he boasted about Babylon as a great city that he had built (Daniel 4:30). Such egotistical idolatry incurred God's wrath. God humbled Nebuchadnezzar by driving him from men to eat grass like an ox for seven years (Daniel 4:33–37). Sometime later, Nebuchadnezzar's grandson Belshazzar was King of Babylon, and he, too, was proud and idolatrous (Daniel 5:1–4). God responded to Belshazzar's wickedness by allowing the Medes and Persians to kill him and seize his kingdom (Daniel 5:30–31).

Acts 12:20–23 records the surprising death of Herod Agrippa I, another proud king who refused to honor God. When King Herod attired himself, sat on his throne, and received the worship of his subjects, immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he died of a worm infestation.

Psalm 2:11, NIV: Serve the LORD with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling.

What does Psalm 2:11 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

David, the author of this psalm (Acts 4:25), calls upon the rebellious kings and rulers to serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling; that is, with respect and strong emotion. Instead of opposing the Lord (Psalm 2:1–6), the kings and rulers had an opportunity to do His bidding reverently and with deep joy.

Service that combines reverence and joy is the hallmark of genuine Christianity. Psalm 100:2 implores God's people to "serve the LORD with gladness!" Further, God's people ought to humbly acknowledge His authority and ownership. Scripture states, "Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture" (Psalm 100:3).

The early believers who trusted in Christ on the Day of Pentecost modeled this kind of relationship to God. Acts 2:42–47 reports that they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, broke bread together, prayed, shared their goods with one another, gave generously to help the needy, ate with glad hearts, and praised God. In Psalm 5:7 the psalmist shared his resolve to respond to God's abundant, steadfast love to enter God's house and bow down toward the Lord's temple in fear of Him. This attitude of trust and devotion to God should be repeated by all believers.

Psalm 2:12, NIV: Kiss his son, or he will be angry and your way will lead to your destruction, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

What does Psalm 2:12 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

The psalmist, David (Acts 4:25), continues his counsel to the kings and rulers by telling them to kiss the Son to avert His anger. This contrasts with their plans to defy God (Psalm 2:1–6).

"Kiss" suggests homage. When Elijah was depressed in the desert and feeling that he was the only one who worshiped the Lord, the Lord told him, "Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him" (1 Kings 19:18). In biblical times a kiss on the cheek was an expression of friendship. Judas, the betrayer of Jesus, feigned friendship with Jesus by kissing him (Matthew 26:47–49). In 1 Thessalonians 5:26, Paul commanded the Christians to "greet all the brothers with a holy kiss." Today, at least in Western cultures, a firm handshake and/or a hug is an equivalent sign of friendliness.

This psalm makes it clear that failure to establish a friendly relationship with the Anointed One brings about His anger and wrath that results in damnation (John 3:36). Revelation 20:10–15 reveals that this fate involves being cast into the lake of fire. However, those who "kiss the Son" are blessed and protected by Him (John 3:16–18). This is a summary of the gospel message: that we can be saved only through faith in Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 16:31).

Hebrews chapter 1

New International Version

1 In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, **2** but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. **3** The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. **4** So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

5 For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father'? Or again, 'I will be his Father, and he will be my Son'?

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

7 In speaking of the angels he says, 'He makes his angels spirits, and his servants flames of fire.'

8 But about the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. **9** You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.'

10 He also says, 'In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. **11** They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. **12** You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.'

Context Summary

Hebrews 1:1–4 summarizes the entire book of Hebrews. God has spoken to mankind in many ways, but now He speaks to us through Christ. This same man, Jesus Christ, is also God, and shares in all aspects of the divine nature. Jesus' superiority over all other things is summarized in His symbolic position, seated at the right hand of God the Father. Everything which follows in the book of Hebrews supports this same basic theme: Christ is above and beyond all other things.

Hebrews 1:1, NIV: In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,

What does Hebrews 1:1 mean? [\[↑ See verse text ↑\]](#)

Hebrews begins with a reference to God's communication with mankind. The letter is primarily written to Jewish believers, who placed great importance on the prophets of the Old Testament. Verses 1 and 2 explain that God spoke through prophets in the past, and speaks now through Jesus Christ. This is an important point for several reasons.

First, this reminds us that the Old Testament and New Testament are not contradictory. The message of God given by the prophets is not different than the message of God given through Christ. The same God is speaking, continuing to show us more and more of His plans.

Second, this emphasizes how important it is to listen to the message of Christ. If God is speaking, then we ought to listen. The Jewish people, in particular, would have been sensitive to this idea. Israel was the chosen nation, given special attention by God. The message of the prophets was given to Israel, and God expected them to listen to what He said. Here, the writer of Hebrews wants us to understand that when God speaks, we have an obligation to pay attention. This is the background for this letter's many warnings against abandoning the gospel.

Hebrews 1:2, NIV: but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.

What does Hebrews 1:2 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Verses 1 and 2 of Hebrews emphasize the fact that Christ is the latest part of God's continuous, consistent message. Where God had spoken through the prophets of the Old Testament, He now speaks through the person of Jesus Christ. These are not contradictory messages. Jesus is the Messiah of whom those prophets spoke. Since this is a message from God, it stands to reason that those who love God ought to listen. Knowing that Jesus is a message from God, and is God, and is the ultimate truth sets the table for this letter's many warnings against rejecting the gospel.

The end of verse 2 also introduces an idea which is fundamental to the Christian faith: Jesus Christ is God. The first four verses of this book establish that Jesus is not some created being or a higher form of angel. According to verse 3, Jesus is the "exact imprint" of the nature of God. This is the consistent teaching of the Bible, that Christ is both fully God and fully man.

The words of this verse echo the Gospel of John, which notes that "all things were made through [Christ], and without [Christ] was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3). This establishes that Jesus is, in fact, part of the un-created and eternal God. All things which "were made" were made by God; the only thing not "made" is the eternal Creator.

Hebrews 1:3, NIV: The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

What does Hebrews 1:3 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

A major theme of the book of Hebrews is the supremacy of Christ. Faced with persecution, there is a temptation to follow the crowd. Jewish Christians of that era would have been under pressure to return to Judaism, rather than continue as Christians. The first four verses of Hebrews serve as an introduction to the idea that Jesus is the better way.

This verse also provides important support for the divinity of Jesus. That is, these words imply that Jesus Christ is, in fact, God. The Greek word *charaktēr* is translated here as "exact imprint" or "exact representation.". The Greek word for "nature" here is *hypostaseōs*. This is the source of the theological term "hypostatic union," a fancy way of saying that Jesus is both God and man. Combined, these words mean that Jesus' nature is identical to that of God. Christ is divine, exactly as God is divine.

The reference to sitting at the "right hand" is important in ancient literature. This is a symbolic reference to honor and power. A person seated at the right hand of the king was considered trustworthy, and he was bestowed with the power of that king. References to Jesus as "seated" at the right hand of the Father imply His absolute power and authority.

Hebrews 1:4, NIV: So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

What does Hebrews 1:4 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Verse 4 makes another reference to the superiority of Jesus. In prior verses, the writer has explained that God's message to mankind is now being given through Jesus. Since Jesus Christ is the "exact imprint" of the nature of God, He is the ultimate authority. These verses also remind a reader that Jesus is the Creator;

He is not a created being. This makes Him superior to all other beings, including the angels.

Worship of angels, and other spiritual beings, was not uncommon in the day this letter was written. Part of the point of verse 4 is that Jesus is not on the same level as these beings. He is far, far above them. Even if an angel were to appear and give a different message than that of Christ, Christ would still be the superior authority (Galatians 1:8).

The "name" of Jesus, in this context, has more to do with status and reputation than just a personal label. Jesus' position as divine, His role as Creator, and His work in reconciling God and man make Him "more excellent" than any other conceivable spiritual being. The following verses will give explicit Old Testament proof that the Messiah—Jesus Christ—is not merely some angelic being. Rather, He is the unique and all-powerful Son of God.

Context Summary

Hebrews 1:5–14 uses a collection of Old Testament quotations. These are used to support the claims made in verses 1 through 4. In particular, the writer is explaining that Jesus Christ is not merely some angelic being or a created spiritual power. He is the exact nature of God and above all other authorities.

Since this letter is written to a Jewish audience, this use of Old Testament material is crucial and would have been especially effective. This explanation continues through the entire second chapter of Hebrews.

Hebrews 1:5, NIV: For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father'? Or again, 'I will be his Father, and he will be my Son'?

What does Hebrews 1:5 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Verses 1 through 4 described Jesus as above any angel, both in power and authority. Starting in verse 5, the writer of Hebrews presents specific evidence from the Old Testament to support this. According to the prophets, the Messiah—Jesus Christ—is not some created being or spiritual power. He is the unique and superior Son of God. This explanation will continue through all of chapter 2. The

writer will pause, however, in Hebrews 2:1–4 to give the first of several warnings against rejecting the gospel message.

The first citation given is from Psalm 2:7. This Psalm describes the crowning of a king, accompanied by celebration. Meanwhile, in other pagan nations, people oppose this new ruler. Psalm 2 encourages the other territories to obey God and to follow His chosen leader. Psalm 2:7 specifically implies that this new ruler derives his right to the throne from his relationship to God. The expression "I have begotten you" from this verse does not refer to biology, but to authority.

The writer of Hebrews uses this reference to support his claim that Jesus is an authority far above and beyond any angel. This same verse, Psalm 2:7, is quoted by Paul, who also makes the connection between it and the Messiah (Acts 13:33).

The second Old Testament citation is from 2 Samuel 7:14. This is part of a message given to King David, where God speaks through the prophet Nathan. In its immediate context, the verse refers to the literal family of David, since it also describes the penalties David's son would endure for disobedience. The writer of Hebrews is extending this concept of lineage, along with the reference in Psalm 2:7, to apply to the ultimate descendant of David, Jesus Christ. This connects to the idea of Jesus being highly honored, as mentioned in Hebrews 1:3.

Hebrews 1:6, *NIV*: And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him.'

What does Hebrews 1:6 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

This is part of an extended series of Old Testament quotes. The writer of Hebrews seeks to prove, from the Jewish Scriptures, that Jesus Christ is a superior authority to any angel or other spiritual being. This list of evidence will continue through chapter 2, pausing only briefly to deliver a warning against ignoring the message of God.

Verse 5 made reference to Psalm 2:7, which refers to a newly-crowned king as "begotten." In that context, the meaning was coming into power and authority.

Verse 5 also quoted from 2 Samuel 7:14, which connected the idea of God's role in king-making to the lineage of David.

Here, in verse 6, the idea of "again, when he brings the firstborn" is really meant to connect the words "bring" and "again." In other words, this is a reference to the second coming of Jesus. This is the time when God will "again bring" Jesus into the world. At this point in time, instead of being a poor and humble figure, Messiah will be a conquering and mighty figure, openly worshipped by the angels.

The writer of Hebrews makes this link through Psalm 97:7, though some also see a reference to Deuteronomy 32:43. Hebrews uses quotations from the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament made by Jewish scholars. This results in some subtly different wording than is found in other, direct-from-Hebrew citations. In this instance, the word translated as "gods," with a small letter "g" in Psalm 97:7, is from a Hebrew term *elohiym*, a plural term which is sometimes used for God, and other times for generic spiritual beings. The Septuagint translators chose the Greek term for "angels," which corresponds to the context of the passage.

John chapter 1

New International Version

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was with God in the beginning. **3** Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. **4** In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. **8** He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. **10** He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. **11** He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. **12** Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name,

he gave the right to become children of God-- **13** children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

15 (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, 'This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.') **16** Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. **17** For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. **18** No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

Context Summary

John 1:1–18 is a poetic introduction of Jesus Christ. Jesus is referred to using the Greek word *Logos*, meaning “The Word.” This passage clearly describes Jesus as identical to God, and co-creator with God. These verses summarize Jesus’ ministry and mission on Earth. The passage also explains how John the Baptist (a different John from the author of this gospel) was sent ahead of Christ to prepare for His arrival.

John 1:1, NIV: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

What does John 1:1 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

The first verse of John establishes several important facts, and introduces an important term. Jesus is referred to as "The Word," from the Greek word *logos*. Christ is the *Logos*, the definition, the meaning, the "Word" of God. This is the first of John's seven names for Jesus: "The Word." The rest of the gospel is John's attempt to prove this through various forms of evidence, in particular Jesus' miracles. The first eighteen verses of John counter many false beliefs about God. Verse 1 establishes that the universe had a beginning, contrary to the idea that it is eternal. It also states that God has existed (at least) from that beginning. Later verses will show that God, in fact, created all that exists. This verse also makes it very clear that this *Logos*, Jesus, is identical to the Creator: the Word *was* God. This begins to establish the concept of the Trinity, where God is one being in three distinct persons.

John 1:2, NIV: He was with God in the beginning.

What does John 1:2 mean? [[↑](#) [See verse text](#) [↑](#)]

Verse 2 continues to introduce Jesus, while countering false views of spirituality. Verse 1 described Jesus as the *Logos*, meaning "The Word," of God. Jesus is a living message, a definition of God the Father. John also specifies that Jesus did not become God, or rise to the level of God. Jesus Christ was always God, from the very beginning. John 1:1 states that the Word was God, not something separate from God. John 1:2 clarifies that this was true, right from the start. Jesus was not a created being, nor a separate being. He was, and is, identical to God. This is a claim Jesus will make of Himself later in the gospel. In John 8:38, for instance, Jesus claims to speak what He has heard directly from the Father. Shortly after, in John 8:58, Jesus not only claims to have existed before Abraham, He refers to Himself using the name of God: I AM. John will relate several of these "I AM" statements in his book.

John 1:3, NIV: Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

What does John 1:3 mean? [[↑](#) [See verse text](#) [↑](#)]

The role of God as Creator is established in verse 3. The universe is not the product of mindless matter, but an intelligent Creator. In John 1:1 and John 1:2, Jesus is said to be identical to God. Here, Scripture makes the interesting point that nothing created was created apart from Jesus. This is important for several reasons. First, it proves that Jesus is not an angel, a man, or some other formed being. Secondly, it implies a difference between things which begin to exist, and the One who always existed. In other words, there is one thing that did not "begin to exist," which did not "come into being." This one—and only—thing is God. The fancier term for this idea is the "Cosmological Argument," or the argument from a "first cause." This is an important purpose of the first 18 verses of John: countering all other concepts of what God is, or is not.

John 1:4, NIV: In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

What does John 1:4 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Verse 4 proclaims Christ's role as the giver of eternal life. John will spend much more time later in his gospel explaining Jesus' role in bringing life to mankind. This verse also refers to Jesus using the second of John's seven names for Jesus: "The Light." To a Hebrew, "light" was the ultimate value. All good things were said to be "light," and evil was "darkness." Light implies a revealing. Jesus not only exposes our sinfulness, He illuminates a way to be saved from it. Light implies knowledge and awareness, while darkness is ignorance. For some, darkness is a deliberate choice. They know that what they do is wrong, so they prefer to hide from the truth. Light guides and comforts, but it can be infuriating to someone who wants to stay in the shadows. The light, in this case, is specifically for mankind. Jesus will proclaim Himself as "the Light of the world" in John 8:12.

John 1:5, NIV: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

What does John 1:5 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Jesus' light came during a dark time, according to verse 5. Sadly, mankind didn't respond very well. The second phrase of this verse is sometimes translated as "the darkness did not overcome it," or "the darkness did not comprehend it." The original Greek word is *katalmbano*, which can mean "acquire," "grasp," or "lay hold of." Since light is associated with knowledge, this in part means that Jesus was not (is not) understood by the world. Many people who reject the gospel do so because they misunderstand it. This inability to see Jesus for what He truly is has more to do with a person's stubbornness than with their intellect (John 7:17). The evidence is there, but those who prefer darkness will not see it for what it is. This also has a sense of "seizing," as in taking possession. Of course, the world would physically "grasp" the person of Jesus (John 19:18), but it could not overcome the Messiah (John 19:19–20).

John 1:6, NIV: There was a man sent from God whose name was John.

What does John 1:6 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Verse 6 introduces John the Baptist as a messenger of God. This is not John, the gospel writer and disciple of Jesus. The Baptist is Jesus' cousin, the son of Elizabeth (Luke 1:57–60). He was the first person to react to the presence of the Messiah, even though he was an unborn child (Luke 1:41–44). John the Baptist would grow into a spiritual powerhouse, calling Israel to "repent," which literally means to turn around. Baptism was already practiced in this region, as a sign of repentance. It was sometimes used by those converting to Judaism. The fact that the Baptist was doing this to Jews made his ministry controversial. His role was exactly this: to "prepare the way" for the Promised One. Later in chapter 1, the Baptist will make it clear that he is not the Messiah. We often forget that John the Baptist was only five or six months older than Jesus, and yet he began his preaching ministry much earlier.

John 1:7, NIV: He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe.

What does John 1:7 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

John the Baptist's role as a witness is central to verse 7. He is sent to tell other people about the coming Messiah, which is Jesus. "Light" was the ultimate standard for Israel. Everything good was said to be "light," evil was "darkness." This not only implies good and evil, but knowledge and darkness. Just as Moses, the Old Testament law, and the temple were small lights pointing to Jesus, John the Baptist is a tiny light leading people to the One True Light. And, not just so that they would see, but so that they would believe. John's ministry heavily revolved around baptism, which was already known to Jews of that time. Jews would sometimes baptize a person who wanted to convert to Judaism. But the Baptist was "converting" Jews! This is one reason he was interrogated by local religious leaders: why would God's chosen people need to repent and convert?

John 1:8, NIV: He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

What does John 1:8 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Verse 8 clearly states that John the Baptist is not the promised Light itself, but only a witness. Unlike many popular teachers, the Baptist wasn't interested in fame or fortune. He was there only to point others to Christ. Later on, as his followers begin to leave him for Jesus, the Baptist is happy (John 3:28–30). His repentance ministry was meant to soften hearts prior to Jesus emerging on the scene. The Baptist's claim is that the One who is coming is far more worthy; John the Baptist is not fit to untie His sandals (Mathew 3:11). This is a fulfillment of prophecy, recorded in Isaiah 40:3, which speaks of a single voice, crying out in the desert, making a straight path for God. Previous signs pointing towards God, such as the law of Moses, and the tabernacle, were meant to lead people to this point. Now, the time has come to repent of sins and accept the Light of the World.

John 1:9, NIV: The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

What does John 1:9 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Light is a symbol of life, knowledge, and goodness. In verse 9, we are reminded that Jesus is the "true light." "True" here is from the potent Greek word *alethinós*. This means something "equal in every possible respect, sharing the same nature and reality." In other words, Christ is the "one and only, absolutely perfect, real and true light." This is something Jesus will echo in John 14:6, by claiming to be "the way, the truth, and the life," exclusively. There is no room to see Jesus as one way to heaven, or a possible way. He is the one and only, real and true way. Unlike the law of Moses, which was given only to the people of Israel, this light is given to everyone—to the entire world. The best-known verse in the entire Bible, John 3:16, sums this up by saying that God loved the *entire* world enough to send His Son for the salvation of *anyone* who believes in Him. Not all people will choose to accept that light, however. Some will deliberately stay in the dark.

John 1:10, NIV: He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him

What does John 1:10 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Jesus is not only the light, He is also the Creator. As Jesus, God was physically present on earth, but verse 10 describes a sad situation. The people of the world didn't recognize Him. Not only do people reject the knowledge brought by the light, they run from the One the light comes from in the first place! The Greek term for "world" in this verse is *kosmos*, often used to refer to the fallen, sinful system of thinking. This is the worldly mindset which rejects God, His knowledge, and His Word. This is why repentance is a core aspect of the gospel: a person must be willing to turn away from darkness and into the light. Jesus later points out that God has given many reasons for mankind to believe in Him (John 5:31–47). These include scriptures, miracles, and human testimonies. For those who want to know, there is more than enough evidence to make the right choice. However, people continue to reject Him out of pride and arrogance (John 7:17).

John 1:11, NIV: He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

What does John 1:11 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Jesus came to all of the people of the world, as a Savior. However, during His human life, He came specifically to the people of Israel. If any culture on earth should have been able to recognize the Messiah, it ought to have been God's chosen people. Israel had been given God's Word, including many prophecies of Messiah. They had been beaten down by Rome and other powerful invaders. Israel should have been looking for the Promised One, and eager to welcome Him. God came to those He had created, for the entire world (John 3:16), and Jesus came as a man directly to Israel. And yet, He was rejected, hated, and eventually killed by those very people (Isaiah 53:3, John 18:35). The one group of people who should have welcomed Him were the ones who called for His death! This is part of the gospel message: that even when we claim to be

seeking God's will, we tend to turn away from it in order to go our own way (Romans 3:9–10).

John 1:12, NIV: Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

What does John 1:12 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

John 3:16 may be the most famous verse in the Bible. It is certainly the most-memorized piece of Scripture. However, John 1:12 is also an excellent summary of the gospel. All who receive Christ, through faith, become children of God. This is described using the Greek term *exousia*, often translated as a "right," or an entitlement. There are spiritual honors given to all believers, simply on the basis of being part of that family. However, this word also implies the power to do something. Becoming a child of God doesn't simply result in privileges, but spiritual power. A name, in literature, legal documents, and conversation, is a symbol of that person. The "name" of Jesus is not a magical formula, or a voodoo incantation. "Faith in the name of Jesus" means trust in His person, His sacrifice, and His salvation. This is not for absolutely everyone, however. This verse specifies that this power (or right) is only extended to those who "receive" Him.

John 1:13, NIV: children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

What does John 1:13 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

Verse 13 is this gospel's first mention of being "born" into the Kingdom of God. The term "born again" has become a cliché, and one many people misunderstand. It's an important idea, though, because of what it implies. When a child is born, all of the effort, energy, and pain is endured by the mother. And yet, it is the child who experiences the most change. Salvation is exactly the same: God's pain and effort result in our benefit. Saying that this does not occur "by blood" means it is not a natural occurrence. Saying that it is not "of the will of the flesh" means it is not a matter of human decisions. This rebirth is entirely the work of God, and according to His will. Our salvation is not dependent on

anything in our human nature. This is good, because if it was, we'd all be lost forever! Jesus will clarify this concept during His conversation with Nicodemus, in John chapter 3.

John 1:14, NIV: The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

What does John 1:14 mean? [[↑ See verse text ↑](#)]

A critical part of the gospel is the fact that Jesus was truly, fully, physically human. The first eighteen verses of John's gospel not only introduce Jesus, they counter false spiritual beliefs. One of these errors is that idea that Jesus was only a mirage, or an illusion. This is not true: Christ was a one hundred percent authentic human being. Verse 14 makes this explicitly clear by using the name of "The Word," while saying very directly that He "became flesh," living among human beings. This means Jesus was not a hologram, or a ghost disguised as a person. He was a real, living, breathing person. As a result, He could claim to have experienced everything we do as mortal people (Hebrews 4:15). The Greek word used here is *skenoō*, which suggests the tabernacle of the Old Testament. The tabernacle was a temporary structure, symbolic of God's "dwelling" with His people, while at the same time a literal physical place. Jesus is with us and among us, in human form, much as God was among His people in the tabernacle. Verse 14 also uses a critical term, found also in John 1:18 and John 3:16: *monogenes*. This is the source of the phrase, "one and only," or "only begotten," and it means that Jesus is of the exact same "stuff" as God. This verse also mentions the second of John's seven names for Jesus, "The Son of God."