

Lesson Two

(1:1-4)

GOD AND HIS SON

³He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs.

This lesson is closely tied in with lesson 1 in that both lessons concentrate on the fact that God has spoken. Lesson 1 touched on those through whom God spoke while directing attention to the fact that he has spoken. This lesson will continue to discuss God's speaking, and those through whom he has spoken.

1:3 — He reflects the glory of God — The Greek text affirms even more clearly that Jesus is the exact representation of God, in such a way that we see God in Christ. Note the familiar John 14:8, then 17:5; Colossians 1:15-19. In the Old Covenant scriptures, the word "glory" sometimes was a substitution for God's person. For instance, when the "glory

of God" filled the Holy of Holies, God filled the Holy of Holies, etc. When we fall short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23, we fall short of God and his will for us.

bears the very stamp — The Greek text has it: "Jesus, being the reflection (*ἀπαύγασμα*) and character (*χαρακτήρ*) . . ."

upholding the universe — The idea in "upholding" (bearing) well expresses the Greek word (*φέρων*), in that it is a continual activity, and Jesus is active in the matter, accomplishing it by means of his powerful word (note the idea in Genesis 1 "God spoke, etc., . . ."). The same Greek word is in II Peter 1:21.

When he had made purification for sins — This expression picks up the major thrust of the whole epistle: the high-priestly work of Jesus. The essence of the new covenant is that it offers remission of sins, which the Old Covenant could not do. God planned through his son, Jesus, to make redemption possible, and when that was finished (John 19:30), God's son sat down at his father's right hand to await the consummation of all things (I Corinthians 15:24-28). Though the love of God is not mentioned in this book, the results of God's love are manifest, especially in this area.

V. 4 — **having become** — By virtue of who he is, and what he has done, Jesus far surpasses the heavenly beings we know as angels. In fact, as the following text (1:5 — 2:18) shows, he created them, and they are merely servants of his. Note Paul's assertion about the name of Jesus (which equals the person of Jesus) in Philippians 2:9-11.

Now in reviewing the whole text of 1:1-4, with special emphasis upon God and his son, the following are items of interest:

God has spoken in the past in various ways and through various people, but now he has spoken in his son. His son, Jesus, has been described in various ways 1. appointed heir of all things, 2. creator of the world, 3. reflector of God, both in image and substance, 4. sustainer of the universe, 5. made purification for sins, 6. sits now at God's right hand, 7. is superior to (even) heavenly messengers. Consideration of these attributes will lead us to meditate upon the nature of the message which came through Jesus. As the epistle bears out, it is a superior message to any before, and is also the last message from God, since no messenger can surpass Jesus. In effect, God spoke when Jesus spoke. We need expect no subsequent revelation from God — Jesus (through his apostles) gave us God's final and best message.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 2:

8. List all the descriptive phrases about Jesus in 1:1-4.
9. Attempt to give some explanation of each of those listed in #8.

TWENTY-SIX LESSONS ON HEBREWS

10. If you were trying to describe Jesus, what terms/phrases would you use?
11. Does the description of Jesus in our text differ from that in the gospel accounts (It is not as complete, of course, but does it differ/contradict)?
12. If the nature of the messenger (= Jesus) of God is as it is, what should we expect regarding the message from the messenger?
13. What revelation of God came through prophets (such as Moses) and angels?
14. Were the prophets and angels comparable to God's son in nature, etc.?
15. Is the revelation through (a) son superior to that through prophets, etc.?