

St. Jerome Adult Bible Study
Letter to the Hebrews – Chapter 1 & 2
Notes and Selected Catechism (CCC) References

Hebrews 1:1-3

¹In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; ²in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe, ³who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being, and who sustains all things by his mighty word. When he had accomplished purification from sins, he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

CCC: 102 Through all the words of Sacred Scripture, God speaks only one single Word, his one Utterance in whom he expresses himself completely: You recall that one and the same Word of God extends throughout Scripture, that it is one and the same Utterance that resounds in the mouths of all the sacred writers, since he who was in the beginning God with God has no need of separate syllables; for he is not subject to time.

CCC: 65 "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son." Christ, the Son of God made man, is the Father's one, perfect and unsurpassable Word. In him he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one. St. John of the Cross, among others, commented strikingly on *Hebrews* 1:1-2: In giving us his Son, his only Word (for he possesses no other), he spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word - and he has no more to say. . . because what he spoke before to the prophets in parts, he has now spoken all at once by giving us the All Who is His Son. Any person questioning God or desiring some vision or revelation would be guilty not only of foolish behavior but also of offending him, by not fixing his eyes entirely upon Christ and by living with the desire for some other novelty.

CCC: 241 For this reason the apostles confess Jesus to be the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"; as "the image of the invisible God"; as the "radiance of the glory of God and the very stamp of his nature".

Hebrews 1:6

⁶And again, when he leads the first-born into the world, he says: "Let all the angels of God worship him."

CCC: 333 From the Incarnation to the Ascension, the life of the Word incarnate is surrounded by the adoration and service of angels. When God "brings the firstborn into the world, he says: 'Let all God's angels worship him.'" Their song of praise at the birth of Christ has not ceased resounding in the Church's praise: "Glory to God in the highest!" They protect Jesus in his infancy, serve him in the desert, strengthen him in his agony in the garden, when he could have been saved by them from the hands of his enemies as Israel had been. Again, it is the angels who "evangelize" by proclaiming the Good News of Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection. They will be present at Christ's return, which they will announce, to serve at his judgment.

Hebrews 1:13 -14

¹³But to which of the angels has he ever said: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool"? ¹⁴Are they not all ministering spirits sent to serve, for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

CCC: 447 Jesus ascribes this title to himself in a veiled way when he disputes with the Pharisees about the meaning of Psalm 110, but also in an explicit way when he addresses his apostles.

Throughout his public life, he demonstrated his divine sovereignty by works of power over nature, illnesses, demons, death and sin.

CCC: 331 Christ is the center of the angelic world. They are *his* angels: "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him." They belong to him because they were created *through* and *for* him: "for in him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities - all things were created through him and for him." They belong to him still more because he has made them messengers of his saving plan: "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?"

Hebrews 2:4

^{4o}God added his testimony by signs, wonders, various acts of power, and distribution of the gifts of the holy Spirit according to his will.

CCC: 156 What moves us to believe is not the fact that revealed truths appear as true and intelligible in the light of our natural reason: we believe "because of the authority of God himself who reveals them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived". So "that the submission of our faith might nevertheless be in accordance with reason, God willed that external proofs of his Revelation should be joined to the internal helps of the Holy Spirit." Thus the miracles of Christ and the saints, prophecies, the Church's growth and holiness, and her fruitfulness and stability "are the most certain signs of divine Revelation, adapted to the intelligence of all"; they are "motives of credibility" (*motiva credibilitatis*), which show that the assent of faith is "by no means a blind impulse of the mind".

Hebrews 2:9

⁹but we do see Jesus "crowned with glory and honor" because he suffered death, he who "for a little while" was made "lower than the angels," that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

CCC: 624 "By the grace of God" Jesus tasted death "for every one". In his plan of salvation, God ordained that his Son should not only "die for our sins" but should also "taste death", experience the condition of death, the separation of his soul from his body, between the time he expired on the cross and the time he was raised from the dead. The state of the dead Christ is the mystery of the tomb and the descent into hell. It is the mystery of Holy Saturday, when Christ, lying in the tomb, reveals God's great sabbath rest after the fulfillment of man's salvation, which brings peace to the whole universe.

CCC: 629 To the benefit of every man, Jesus Christ tasted death (cf. *Heb* 2:9). It is truly the Son of God made man who died and was buried.

Hebrews 2:10

¹⁰For it was fitting that he, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the leader to their salvation perfect through suffering.

CCC: 609 By embracing in his human heart the Father's love for men, Jesus "loved them to the end", for "greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." In suffering and death his humanity became the free and perfect instrument of his divine love which desires the salvation of men. Indeed, out of love for his Father and for men, whom the Father wants to save, Jesus freely accepted his Passion and death: "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord." Hence the sovereign freedom of God's Son as he went out to his death.

Hebrews 2:12 – 13

¹²...“I will proclaim your name to my brothers, in the midst of the assembly I will praise you”;
¹³and again: “I will put my trust in him”; and again: “Behold, I and the children God has given me.”

CCC: **2777** In the Roman liturgy, the Eucharistic assembly is invited to pray to our heavenly Father with filial boldness; the Eastern liturgies develop and use similar expressions: "dare in all confidence," "make us worthy of. . . ." From the burning bush Moses heard a voice saying to him, "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." Only Jesus could cross that threshold of the divine holiness, for "when he had made purification for sins," he brought us into the Father's presence: "Here am I, and the children God has given me."

Our awareness of our status as slaves would make us sink into the ground and our earthly condition would dissolve into dust, if the authority of our Father himself and the Spirit of his Son had not impelled us to this cry . . . 'Abba, Father!' . . . When would a mortal dare call God 'Father,' if man's innermost being were not animated by power from on high?"

Hebrews 2:14 – 15

¹⁴Now since the children share in blood and flesh, he likewise shared in them, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁴and free those who through fear of death had been subject to slavery all their life. Surely he did not help angels but rather the descendants of Abraham;

CCC: **635** Christ went down into the depths of death so that "the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." Jesus, "the Author of life", by dying destroyed "him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and [delivered] all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage." Henceforth the risen Christ holds "the keys of Death and Hades", so that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth."

CCC: **407** The doctrine of original sin, closely connected with that of redemption by Christ, provides lucid discernment of man's situation and activity in the world. By our first parents' sin, the devil has acquired a certain domination over man, even though man remains free. Original sin entails "captivity under the power of him who thenceforth had the power of death, that is, the devil". Ignorance of the fact that man has a wounded nature inclined to evil gives rise to serious errors in the areas of education, politics, social action and morals.

Definitions of some words found in the footnotes:

A Fortiori: [ah fohR-ti-oh-ree;

-adverb Latin .

for a still stronger reason; even more certain; all the more.

(Example: The weather forecaster on TV says the skies are clear. John looked out his window and saw that it was raining. The conclusion, a fortiori, is that it is raining.)

Parousia: [pe' ru sia]

-noun Greek.

The Second Coming of Christ

(Example: All Christians look forward to the Parousia when Jesus will rule the world.)

Leitmotif: [lahyt-moh-teef]

-noun

a motif or theme associated or repeated throughout a music drama or literary work with a particular person, situation, or idea.

(Example: Ravel's *Boléro* has a dramatic but short leitmotif that builds to a climactic finalé.)