

Hebrews Lesson 2 Article

The first chapter closes with two quotations so relevant to our twenty-first century world. Perhaps we, more than any previous generation, know that this planet has a sell-by date. What Christians can offer to our environmentally-obsessed society is the truth that God in Christ has the last word and that, using the oft-repeated quote from Psalm 110 (1:13), the Jesus we worship is already in the place of power over history. Such a dynamic truth brings great comfort, but also an awesome responsibility.¹

Verse 14 summarizes the place of the angels: they are ministering spirits, not enthroned sons; and their work is to minister to us who are heirs with Christ in His wonderful salvation.

As you review these quotations, you can see the majesty and glory of the Son of God. As v. 4 states, Christ has a more excellent name than the angels because through His suffering and death He acquired a greater inheritance. In His character, work, and ministry Christ stands supreme. Though His glorious kingdom is not seen on earth today, He has still been enthroned as King and will return one day to establish righteousness on this earth.²

After the Fall, God's first step toward restoration was the concept of covenant based on His invitation and mankind's repentant, faithful, obedient response. Because of the Fall, humans were incapable of appropriate action (cf. Rom. 3:21–31; Gal. 3). God Himself had to take the initiative to restore covenant-breaking humans. He did this by

1. *declaring* mankind righteous through the work of Christ.
2. *freely giving* mankind righteousness through the work of Christ.
3. *providing* the indwelling Spirit who produces righteousness (i.e. Christlikeness, the restoration of the image of God) in mankind.

However, God requires a covenantal response. God decrees (i.e. freely gives) and provides, but humans *must* respond and continue to respond in

1. repentance
2. faith
3. lifestyle obedience
4. perseverance

Righteousness, therefore, is a covenantal, reciprocal action between God and His highest creation. Based on the character of God, the work of Christ, and the enabling of the Spirit, to which each individual must personally and continually respond appropriately. The concept is called “justification by faith.” The concept is revealed in the Gospels, but not in these terms. It is primarily defined by Paul, who uses the Greek term “righteousness” in its various forms over 100 times.³

¹ Hacking, P. H. (2006). *Opening up Hebrews*. Opening Up Commentary (14). Leominster: Day One Publications.

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament* (678). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ Utley, R. J. (1999). *Vol. Volume 10: The Superiority of the New Covenant: Hebrews*. Study Guide Commentary Series (15). Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International.