

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The Lord has gone up with a shout. He who came down from heaven has ascended to where He was before. He lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Ghost. He is seated at the Right Hand of God, the Office of Divine power and authority. The angels worship Him. The heavens are His footstool. But we, like the bewildered Apostles, can but stare upwards towards the bright clouds that will soon usher Him back into our sight, and wonder at the celestial mansions He has prepared.

But we have the Scriptures. That is all we need. And today we hear from the Epistle to the Hebrews. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is generally held to be unknown. Luther writes that it is not an Apostolic Epistle, and that it wasn't written by Paul. He numbered Hebrews among the antilegomenon.

Several subscriptions on later Greek manuscripts, however, read "To the Hebrews written in Rome from Paul to the ones in Jerusalem," and some add "through Timothy". In several original arrangements, Hebrews followed Romans. Clement of Alexandria and Origen attributed the Epistle to Paul, although perhaps through a second author, due to its vocabulary and style, representative of Greek rhetoric.

150 Greek words are used in the Epistle that aren't used anywhere else in the New Testament. Clement suggests that Paul wrote it in Hebrew, and then Luke translated it into Greek. The Authorized Version, in the tradition of these men, titles the Epistle "The Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews," as do the Tyndale and Matthew's Bible. But by 1560 the Protestants

were questioning Paul's authorship, as revealed in the "argument" of the Geneva Bible.

In any case, the Epistle to the Hebrews more than any other New Testament Book reveals the Christology of the Old Testament rituals and the Temple, and exhibits a developed, if early, Christology. It was written by a Divinely inspired author with a strong knowledge of the Israelite cultus, the Christological fulfillment of prophecy, and with the doctrine of Christology. These we have heard this morning.

The Ascension of Christ still fresh in our minds, the Epistle to the Hebrews describes what we have celebrated: "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." He humbled Himself. He who was adored by angels made Himself lower than the angels. He shared in your flesh and blood when He was born of the Virgin Mary. He did it, the Apostle writes, for the suffering of death.

But the death of Christ was not His end, as it is with every other man of flesh and blood. His suffering and death, the Apostle writes, made Him the perfect Captain of your salvation. For He Himself suffered, being tempted. He had to in all things be made like you, His brethren. And for you who have sinned, for you who have fallen short, for you who have broken the Divine Law, for you who are less than perfect, less than holy, in this there is great comfort. Christ suffered what you have suffered, and more. And He prevailed.

He, being flesh and blood, was tempted. But He did not allow that temptation to lead Him to sin. He endured the temptation and did not sin. He remained faithful. He kept the Law. And

more than keeping the letter of the Law, He kept His heart pure, His thoughts and His worship holy and perfect. He spoke only Truth. He gave all glory and honor to the Father. He loved His neighbor as Himself, indeed He lay down His life for the life of the world. He tasted, as the Apostle reveals, “death for everyone.”

So He is able to help you who are tempted. He is the Merciful and Faithful High Priest, the Great High Priest that went before God the Father on your behalf, offering not birds or goats or bulls, but offering Himself on the altar of the cross. There He made propitiation for the sins of the people, for the sins of all men, for your sins. In Christ, all your sins are forgiven. That in itself is a miracle sufficient. But more, as the Apostle writes “He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all one.” You have oneness, unity, communion with God in Christ.

So He is not ashamed to call you brothers, for as He spoke through the Psalmist “I will declare Your Name to My brethren.” So by His Spirit does He declare to you the Divine Name, which is God the Son, to the glory of the Father. And by that declaration is faith worked in you, faith which apprehends Christ. Converted, justified by His Blood, you then are being sanctified, gradually made holy, by His Word and Spirit and Mysteries.

Through His death He destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. He did it that you, who through fear of death were subject to bondage, find release from that bondage, find freedom in Him, in Christ, in your crucified, risen and ascended Lord.

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our Confession, Christ Jesus. For He comes to you this day in bread and wine, that you who are partakers of flesh and blood as He was, become partakers of His Body and Blood. So it is you, then, that are the children whom God has given Him, recipients of His aid, the seed of Abraham, for whom He has made propitiation.

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.