

SESSION EIGHT

THE SON'S SUPERIORITY TO THE ANGELS

Heb 1:5-14

I. THE OVERALL STRUCTURE

- A. The word "angels" in the prologue becomes a *link* (catchword association) with the next section, i.e., 1:5–2:18.
- B. Note the unifying feature of 1:5–2:18
 - 1. Repetition of characteristic terms (note the 10 occurrences of "angels")
 - 2. Utilization of *inclusio*
 - 1:5 and 1:13 2:5 and 2:16
 - a. The middle section (2:1-4) stands as an exhortation between these sections.
 - b. Verses 2:17-18 are a fitting conclusion, but which also serve to introduce the subjects of the next section (i.e., 3:1–5:10). Catchwords!
 - "tempted" - relates to those who were tempted in the wilderness and failed
 - "high priest" - relates to Jesus who stands ready to help as a gentle and merciful high priest.

II. THE OVERVIEW

- A. The Prologue opened by saying that God has spoken in a more climactic way than ever before . . . through His Son. Furthermore, the status and role of the Son is superior to angels (1:4). The remainder of the chapter will substantiate this (note the *illative* γὰρ initiating vs. 5). This will be the first line of argumentation that the New Covenant (brought in personally by the Son) is superior to the Old Covenant (mediated by angels). Hence, the closing thought of the Prologue ("better than the angels") is taken up and developed further in the next section. All of this lays the ground for the exhortation to come in 2:1-4.
- B. The author resorts to a rapid-fire quotation of seven passages from the OT (a *catena*) to support his argument.¹

¹For further insight on this catena, see Herbert W. Bateman, "Two First-Century Messianic Uses of the OT: Heb 1:5-13 and 4QFlor 1:1-19," *JETS* 38:1 (Mar 1995): 11-27.

III. PSALM 2:7 (Heb 1:5)

A. The quotation is exactly like the LXX.

B. Main Point:

The one who is identified as the Messianic king (Ps 2:6) is the same one referred to as God's Son. This does not mean that God has children. Rather, it means that the Messiah has a name and status to God the Father that no other shares. No angel was ever called "God's Son" (though they were called "sons of God").

C. "Today I have begotten Thee"

"Begotten"

This does not mean that the Messiah was created, or came into being at a certain point in history. To understand this, we must understand it in light of kingship in the Ancient Near Eastern World. Pagan gods were thought to be responsible for the bestowal of kingship (sometimes even thought to be *incarnated* in the king). When a god **elevated** a person to kingship, he assumed *at that time* the status of being the deity's "first-born." Drawing upon this analogy, when God **elevated** one of the Davidic descendants to the position of king, He (at that time of incarnation) became God's "first-born." This is applied to the Messiah in Ps 89:3-4, 26-27. We must understand this in light of God's fulfillment in raising up the promised seed to David (i.e., the Davidic covenant).

"Today"

This looks at the unique occasion when the Messiah is elevated to the status of Davidic king. For Jesus, this was clearly at the time that God raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand (note Rom 1:3-4). Note that Acts 13:33 connects Ps 2:7 with the resurrection! Lane (1:26) notes, "The connection of v 5 and vv 3c and 4 establishes that the enthronement at the Father's right hand was the occasion when the name *υἱός* was conferred upon Jesus."

D. Ps 2:7 is also important for where our author is headed in his argument

1. Heb 1:14 speaks of those who will "inherit salvation"
2. Ps 2:8 anticipates the Messiah receiving His inheritance of a universal rule over all nations.

IV. 2 SAM 7:14 (Heb 1:5c)

A. The quotation is exactly as that found in the LXX witnesses.

B. Relation to Ps 2:7

2 Sam 7 is a key passage of the OT in which God makes a covenant with David to give to one of his descendants an eternal-throne kingdom (obviously, speaking of the Messiah). Psalm 2 is David's reflection on this promise/covenant to him. He reflects on what God

intends to do with one of his descendants in making him the Messiah. Both passages attribute the title "son" to this Davidic descendant.²

V. THIRD QUOTATION ?? (Heb 1:6)

A. This is clearly a quotation from the OT, but the source of the quotation is debatable. Options:

1. Deut 32:43 in LXX
2. 4QDt 32:43b (Dead Sea Scroll) — so Ellingworth (p 118)
3. Ps 97:7 (LXX = 96:7)
4. Ode 2:42 (an appendage to the Greek Psalter reflecting Deut 32) — so Lane (1:28)

B. Textual Problems

1. Deut 32:43 is radically different in the LXX than in the MT (added phrases in LXX!). But the Vaticanus ms of the LXX has the same text as Heb 1:6.

2. Ps 97:7 has textual differences:

Ps 97:7 (96:7 in LXX) = προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ

Aor Ind Act. 2-pl

Heb 1:6 = καὶ προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ

Aor Impv Act. 3-pl

C. The Interpretation of δὲ πάλιν

1. The translations

a. *NASB* = "And when he again brings the first-born . . ."

b. *NIV* = "And again, when God brings his first-born . . ."

2. Implications

If the *NASB* is correct, then the verse is connected with the Second Coming. If the *NIV* is correct, then πάλιν is just part of the literary transition words used by our author to introduce another quotation.³ Be careful to note, however, that of the six times πάλιν

²Lane (1:25) notes, "Both were familiar texts The occurrence of a key word in a messianic text could function like a magnet drawing to it other OT texts that contained the same word In this instance the key word that served to attract 2 Sam 7:14 to Ps 2:7 was υἱός, the term that was of primary interest to the writer."

³Lane remarks, "Considerations of context (v 5) and preference in Hebrews (2:13a, b; 4:5; 10:30) support the

is used in Hebrews to introduce a quotation, it is typically καὶ πάλιν, not δὲ πάλιν, as we have here. The δὲ of vs 6 may be signaling a contrast to vs 5 (implying that πάλιν is linked with the verb = "when he again brings").⁴

D. Reflections

Even though Ps 97:7 (LXX 96:7) is slightly different than Heb 1:6, that does not rule it out as the source of the quotation. It is quite common for our author to make variations from his OT quotations. There is sufficient similarity to say that Ps 97:7 can be the intended source [Lane, however, notes that the quotation of Dt 32:43 in Ode 2:43 (odes appended to the Greek Psalter) is exactly the same as Heb 1:6b]. Furthermore, we have to ask whether our author (such a skilled exegete of the OT) would have drawn a quotation from Dt 32:43 which has this clause in the LXX but not in the MT. If Ps 97:7 is the source, this could influence our understanding of the timing issue raised above.

E. The Context of Ps 97

Psalms 96–99 are "enthronement psalms" depicting the coming of the Lord to judge the earth. Note for instance Ps 96:11-13, which is strikingly similar to what the Messiah is expected to do (Ps 2:9-12; Isa 11:4-5). In light of Ps 2:9 being used in Rev 19, this probably is looking to the events of the Second Coming. Hence, Ps 97 opens by calling for joy that the Messiah has finally taken up His reign over the earth. In Rev 11:15-18, we have a similar thought in anticipation of Jesus' return!

F. Implications for the Argument of Heb 1:6

1. If Ps 97:7 is in the author's mind, then he is looking in particular to the contrast between the Son's reception at the Second Coming and the role the angels will play. The Son will be welcomed as the universal king, whereas angels will assist Him at the Second Coming and worship before Him (compare Mt 24:30-31; Rev 19:6,14).
2. Our author is thinking *eschatologically*, and has his mind on the situation to be realized at the Second Coming. This will lead him to consider what the implications will be for those who are faithful to the Son (in contrast to those who are not).

Whether or not Heb 1:6 is drawn from Ps 97:7, there are strong eschatological overtones to the Book of Hebrews (as we shall see).

3. The Son is destined to be the ruling king, whereas the angels are destined to worship Him (contrast 2:9 — in His incarnation, He was made a little while lower than the angels).

decision to take πάλιν as a formula of introduction for the quotation that follows rather than a reference to the parousia (cf. 9:28)" (1:21; cf. 26).

⁴The Gk δὲ πάλιν is used 7x in the NT, and in these cases it consistently unites with the verb to express the idea "to do something again" (Mk 14:70; 15:13; Jn 4:54; 8:2; Gal 5:3; Heb 1:6; 2 Pet 2:20).

VI. PS 104:4 (LXX 103:4) (Heb 1:7)

A. Text

1. Same as in LXX except last two words (LXX has πῦρ φλέγον, the latter being a Pres. Ptc Act, Neut Nom Sg)
2. πνεύματα translates Heb רִיחֹזֹת.
3. ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ translates Heb מַלְאָכָיו.

B. Point

1. The angels are messengers (note Heb מַלְאָךְ); they assist!
2. They are transitory (compared to flame of fire).

VII. PS 45:6-7 (LXX 44:6-7; RAHLF's ed. 44:7-8) (Heb 1:8-9)

A. Text

Essentially the same as LXX, but (1) Vaticanus has εἰς αἰῶνα αἰῶνος and (2) the LXX has no καὶ in the second line .

B. Observations

1. ὁ θεός - probably a vocative in light of Heb 1:9b (the psalmist apparently felt a need to clarify at the second mention by adding ὁ θεός).

Implication: deity! (unless אֱלֹהִים in the MT has a broader meaning). This verse not only points out the eternal nature of the dominion exercised by the Son, but sharpens the contrast to angels by pointing out the Son's quality of deity.

2. εὐθύτητος - gen. of attribute (= the righteous scepter)
3. Quote is extended beyond the first two lines. Why?

Probably to bring μετόχους into the discussion.

Used in the LXX only in Ps 44:8 and III Macc 3:21. In NT, it is used in Lk 5:7 of *partners* in boating enterprise.

Idea: companion, participant or partner in some endeavor. Used several times in the Book of Hebrews with believers in view, though Lane (1:30) thinks angels are in view in this instance.

C. Point of Ps 45

In contrast to angels who are transitory and assisting, the Son is θεός and rules over the kingdom (i.e., He has the role of ruling as θεός). Note the μὲν . . . δὲ construction initiating verses 7 and 8 which highlight the contrast. Furthermore, the Son has an eternal throne, which appropriately links the Ps 45 quotation with 2 Sam 7 (see vv 13 & 16 of 2 Sam 7).

VIII. PS 102:25-27 (LXX 101:26-28) (Heb 1:10-12)

A. Observations

1. Future tense verbs (sets the stage for Heb 12:26-28)
2. Created the οὐρανοί (line 2) - of which the angels are a part.

B. Point

The creation is not eternal, but the Son is! In contrast to the eternal Son ("whose years will not come to an end"), the present creation is likened to an old outer garment which is simply changed. Furthermore, His kingdom will not be shaken at the time when the present creation is destroyed (12:27!). This is all in contrast to angels as "flame of fire."

IX. PS 110:1 (LXX 109:1) (Heb 1:13)

A. Text is same.

B. Notice the prominence of Ps 110 in Hebrews

1. Ps 110:1 - 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2
2. Ps 110:4 - quoted in 5:6; 7:17,21; and alluded to in 6:20.

C. Point: The Son (not the angels!) has been invited to the exalted position of being at God's right hand.

X. CONCLUSION (Heb 1:14)

A. Heb 1:14a

Applies to vv 5-13 as a whole. The angels are *ministering spirits*, not the One whom God has exalted to the place of king (note the connection of terms πνεύματα and λειτουργος/λειτουργικός with vs 7).

B. Heb 1:14b - "inherit salvation"

1. δια - see BAG 181a II 1 - can also mean "for the sake of"
2. Heb 1:14 anticipates the solemn appeal not to neglect the message of salvation in 2:3.
3. μέλλω + pres. inf. - looks to the future aspect of salvation (*about to inherit*)

Ellingworth (133):

"Here the use of μέλλω marks as future the 'salvation' which believers are to 'inherit.'" He goes on to say that μέλλω "is used primarily of the eschatological realities promised but not yet fully realized."

4. We should prepare ourselves for the thought that "salvation" is connected to Messiah's future reign (note 2:5 and 9:27-28).

INSIGHT

Notice that the quotations are grouped into two sets: (1) the two quotations in vs 5 are meant to be a contrast to vs 6; and (2) the quotation in vs 7 is meant to be a contrast to the two quotations in vv 8-12.