

School of the Word
Hebrews
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HEBREWS 1:5-14

Sequence

- ▶ Hebrews 1:5-14
- ▶ In the letter as a whole
- ▶ Why the angels?
- ▶ Which Psalms etc?
- ▶ Commentary
- ▶ Potential for today
- ▶ Conversation

Hebrews 1:5-14 (NAB Revised)

Heb 1:5 For to which of the angels did God ever say: “You are my son; this day I have begotten you”? Or again: “I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me”? **6** And again, when he leads the first-born into the world, he says: “Let all the angels of God worship him.” **7** Of the angels he says: “He makes his angels winds and his ministers a fiery flame”; **8** but of the Son: “Your throne, O God, stands forever and ever; and a righteous sceptre is the sceptre of your kingdom. **9** You loved justice and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions”; **10** and: “At the beginning, O Lord, you established the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands. **11** They will perish, but you remain; and they will all grow old like a garment. **12** You will roll them up like a cloak, and like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.” **13** But to which of the angels has he ever said: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool”? **14** Are they not all ministering spirits sent to serve, for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

- ▶ Notice: Jesus not yet named
- ▶ Minimalistic commentary
- ▶ The “argument” takes its power from the associations of each of the psalms in a rhetoric “*synkrisis*” or comparison
- ▶ Part of a larger argument
 - 1:5-14 The Son, superior to the angels
 - 2:1-4 Invitation to pay attention (a mini exhortation, providing a link)
 - 2:5-18 The Son, lower than the angels

Why the angels?

- ▶ Angels are assumed to be real
 - Religions of the Ancient Near East
 - Judaism at the time
 - Early Christianity
- ▶ Four possibilities to consider
 1. The comment in 1:1-4 required expansion
 2. A comparison to clarify the identity of Jesus
 3. The Law was given through angels; the new Law-giver must be higher
 4. There was angel-worship of some kind in the community

Which Psalms etc?

- ▶ Psalm 2:7
- ▶ 2 Sam 7:14 / 1 Chron 17:13
- ▶ Deut 32:43 (Psalm 96:7)

- ▶ Psalm 103:5
- ▶ Psalm 44:7-8
- ▶ Psalm 101: 26-28
- ▶ Psalm 109:1

- ▶ NB The psalms given in the Septuagint numbering
 - Septuagint = name of Greek Old Testament
 - It means 70 (72), hence the symbol LXX
- ▶ The Psalms etc. are read to point to Messiah (quite traditionally)
- ▶ It is assumed that:
 - God speaks in the Psalms and the Scriptures
 - The Psalms are true and authoritative
 - Scripture already speaks about “the Son”
 - Jesus’ resurrection enables a correct reading of the Scriptures

Commentary

Heb 1:5a For to which of the angels did he ever say:
 “You are my son; this day I have begotten you”?

- ▶ Citation from Psalm 2
- ▶ God is the subject of the previous verb and so also here
- ▶ The expected answer is “no one”
- ▶ “Sons of God” (plural) is sometimes used of angels but never individually
- ▶ Psalm 2 is a royal enthronement Psalm
- ▶ At the time, it was already read to point to the Messiah
- ▶ Psalm 7: king, inheritance, rejoicing.
- ▶ Echo Psalm 109:1 already used by Jesus (!)
- ▶ Today: an anticipate of “today” in Heb 3:7-4:10
- ▶ Hebrew: Pre-existence, humiliation, exaltation

Heb 1:5b Or again,
 “I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me”?

- ▶ Full context is vital: 2 Sam 7:9-16
- ▶ Promise from God through Nathan to David
- ▶ The king is given “a great name”, “above other kings” (7:9)
- ▶ His seed (= descendants) will be raised up as kings
- ▶ His “kingdom and throne” will last forever 7:13, 16)
- ▶ Building a house: cf. But he is worthy of more “glory” than Moses, as the founder of a house has more “honour” than the house itself. (Heb 3:3)

Heb 1:6 And again, when he leads the first-born into the world (*oikoumenē*), he says:
 “Let all the angels of God worship him.”

- ▶ Where’s the text from?
- ▶ Do obeisance to him, all his angels! (Ps 96:7 LXX)
- ▶ Echoes: Lord, rule, throne, “in the world” (*oikoumenē*)
- ▶ And let all the divine sons do obeisance to him. (Deut 32:43 LXX only)
- ▶ Echoes: purify (picking up Heb 1:3, perhaps)
- ▶ First-born: ancient term for Israel and David
- ▶ Also: Jesus in the NT, implying authority, privilege, inheritance
- ▶ *Oikoumenē*: incarnation, second coming, God’s realm (NB for the “world” in the ordinary sense, the writer uses the word “*kosmos*”)
- ▶ *Oikoumenē*: perhaps when God’s brings Jesus into the heavenly court at the resurrection from the dead
- ▶ Notice: the angels are worshipping *the Son*

Heb 1:7 Of the angels he says:
 “He makes his angels winds
 and his ministers a fiery flame”;

- ▶ Psalm 103
- ▶ The angels, not the Son, are the subject
- ▶ It is a remarkably beautiful hymn to the creator
- ▶ The angels are clearly creatures and subject to God
- ▶ By implication, they are as transient as wind and fire
- ▶ By contrast, the Son is eternal

Heb 1:8 but of the Son:
 “Your throne, O God, stands forever and ever;
 and a righteous sceptre is the sceptre of your kingdom.
 9 You loved justice and hated wickedness;
 therefore God, your God, anointed (echrisein) you
 with the oil of gladness above your companions”;

- ▶ Psalm 44:7-8; sceptre and kind have messianic associations
- ▶ Originally, a royal wedding Psalm, for the dynasty of David
- ▶ A fully human king, and yet...
- ▶ The son/king (Jesus) is addressed as “God” (rare: John 1:1, 18, 20:28; Rom 9:5; Tit 3:4; 1 Pet 1:1)
- ▶ The contrast with the angels continues (“forever and ever”)
- ▶ Anointed: lit. echrisein, from which “Christ” or “Messiah”
- ▶ The paradox of Jesus, divine and human, is emphasised
- ▶ Justice = righteousness; cf. Melchizedek, king of righteousness
- ▶ The companions are “his brothers” (Heb 2:10-11) and all who believe in him in Heb 3:14

Heb 1:10 and:
 “At the beginning, O Lord, you established the earth,
 and the heavens are the works of your hands.
 11 They will perish, but you remain;
 and they will all grow old like a garment.
 12 You will roll them up like a cloak,
 and like a garment they will be changed.
 But you are the same, and your years will have no end.”

- ▶ Psalm 101:26-28 (actually the lament of a sick person)
- ▶ This psalm contrasts God and the mortal human being or, in the contrast, the continuing contrast between the transient creatures (angels) and God
- ▶ Yet, the Son is here addressed as “Lord”
- ▶ Cf. a son, ... through whom he created the universe (Heb 1:2)
- ▶ Remaining the same: cf. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Heb 13:8)
- ▶ The kingship and priesthood of Jesus is “unchanging” in Hebrews

Heb 1:13 But to which of the angels has he ever said:
 “Sit at my right hand
 until I make your enemies your footstool”?

- ▶ Psalm 109:1 is the climax of the citations
- ▶ NB “inclusion” from v. 5 “For to which of the angels did God ever say:”
- ▶ Already alluded to: he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb 1:3)
- ▶ Early Christianity:
 - v. 1 (Mt 22:44; 26:64; Mk 12:36, 14:62; 16:19; Lk 20:42; 22:69; Acts 2:34; Rom 8:34; 1 Cor 15:25)

- v. 4 (Rom 11:29)
- ▶ Hebrews: throughout:
 - v. 1 (Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12)
 - v. 4 (Heb 5:6; 6:20; 7:3, 11, 17, 21)
- ▶ Cf. With you is rule (archē) on a day of your power (dunamis) (Ps 109:3 LXX); cf. and who sustains all things by his mighty (dunamis) word. (Heb 1:3)
- ▶ Cf. From the womb, before Morning–star, I brought you forth. (Ps 109:3 LXX)

Heb 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent to serve, for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

- ▶ A final, rhetorical question expecting the answer, “Yes, of course”
- ▶ Thus, the angels, in their several dimensions and roles, are distinctly secondary
- ▶ In this way, the writer affirms “the divinity” of Jesus
- ▶ In this way, the writer prepares us for “the humanity” of Jesus in Heb 2:5-18, a key to his understanding of salvation
- ▶ The very last phrase identifies and includes the readers/hearers
- ▶ The final word is “salvation”, the topic of the whole letter.

1:1-4	1:5-13
whom he made heir of all things (1:2b)	You are my Son, today I have begotten you (1:5 = Ps 2:7; cf. Ps 2:8, Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance)
through whom he made the worlds (1:2c)	You are from the beginning, you laid the foundation of the earth (1:10 = Ps 102:26)
who is the radiance of his glory and image of his nature (1:3a)	Your throne, O God (1:8 = Ps 45:6)
Having made purification for sins (1:3b)	Having loved righteousness and hated lawlessness, therefore God has anointed you (1:9 = Ps 44:7)
he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven (1:3c)	Sit at my right hand (1:13 = Ps 110:1)
becoming so much greater than the angels that he inherited a greater name (1:4)	the oil of gladness beyond your companions (1:9 = Ps 44:7)

Heb 2:1 Therefore, we must attend all the more to what we have heard, so that we may not be carried away. 2 For if the word announced through angels proved firm, and every transgression and disobedience received its just recompense, 3 how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? Announced originally through the Lord, it was confirmed for us by those who had heard. 4 God added his testimony by signs, wonders, various acts of power, and distribution of the gifts of the holy Spirit according to his will.

Potential for today

- ▶ Jesus question: Who do you say I am?
- ▶ The renewed interest in angels (angel shops etc.)
- ▶ Jesus as Son of God is vital for grasping the meaning of the cross and resurrection today
- ▶ Having secured the divinity of Jesus, the writer is free to go on to discuss his very real humanity