

# THE EXALTED SON SUPERIOR TO ANGELS

Hebrews 1:5-14

Similarly, understanding Hebrews 1:5-14 depends on knowing how to look at it.

We'll first read Hebrews 1 then look out some background issues that will help us understand the message of the Preacher. As we read, remember the Preacher is writing to a house church of messianic Jews some of whom are drifting in their commitment to Christ and others tempted to defect and return to Judaism. He is warning them not to drift or defect from the exalted Son through Whom God has spoken.

Read Hebrews 1

## The Importance of “after making” and “having become” (1:3b-4).

Two phrases in verses 3 & 4 are absolutely key to understanding verses 5-14.

*Hebrews 1:3-4 (ESV)*

**3 After making** purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, **4 having become** as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

These two phrases indicate movement; a “before” and “after”. The movement is that of the Son from His preincarnate state through His incarnation and ministry on earth to His return to heaven and subsequent exaltation. The Preacher is describing what took place in heaven upon the ascension of Jesus. Having made purification for sins, Jesus returned to heaven. In response, God the Father exalted the Son. In being exalted, Jesus *became* superior to angels by inheriting a name (status/position) superior to theirs. In making this point, the Preacher is not denying the superiority of the preincarnate Son over the angels by virtue of His deity (1:3). But he is seeking to impress the hearer that the Son has become vastly more superior as a result of His exaltation by the Father *after making purification for sins*.

The Preacher strings together seven Old Testament quotes to support his point that the Son was exalted *after making purification* for sins and, as a result of His exaltation, is (even more) superior to angels.

## Why the emphasis on angels?

Why is the Preacher putting so much emphasis on the superiority of the exalted Son over angels? It is because his messianic Jewish audience held angels and the Law of Moses that came through them, in high esteem. The Apostle Paul reveals that the Law of Moses was put into place through angels (Galatians 3:19) And in Hebrews 2:2 the Preacher will make the point that those who disobeyed the Law put in place through angels, incurred punishment.

There is no indication that the Jewish believers were worshipping angels. The Preacher is not critical of angels; he views angels in a positive light. He presents them and their ministry in the highest possible terms. Angels serve as a benchmark against which to measure the worth of the exalted Son. Angels are “as good as it gets” so far as created beings are concerned, and yet the exalted Son is vastly superior. Angels thus serve to show how vastly superior the exalted Son is, thereby preparing us to pay all the more attention to what He has revealed from the Father (2:1-4).

To drive home the superiority of the exalted Son, the Preacher utilizes a technique termed “chain quotations.” He strings together seven Old Testament quotes to support his point. The Apostle Paul utilizes this same technique in the book of Romans (Romans 9:25-29, 10:18-21 and 11:8-10). The goal of this technique is to persuade the listener that the Preacher’s point is true by the amount of Scriptural evidence gathered in support.

## The Preacher’s Use of the Old Testament (1:5)

The Preacher’s question in verse 5 is rhetorical; God never said these things to an angel, but He did say these things to the Son. When did God the Father say these things to Jesus? At His exaltation **after making** purification for sins.

The Preacher first quotes from Psalm 2.<sup>1</sup> In this Psalm, King David is warning the nations surrounding Israel to abandon their efforts to oppose the Lord and His anointed king. “Son” refers to the king of Israel i.e. David himself and his sons who would succeed him as king.

Read Psalm 2

In the ancient world a king’s son usually succeeded his father on the throne. In Israel, God wanted the kings to regard Him as their father. Thus, the “Son” came to refer to the kings of Israel from the line of David (cf. 2 Samuel 7:4-17; 1 Chronicles 17:3-15).

What day is in view in verse 7 where David reports, “The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; *today* I have begotten you.”? It is not the day of David’s birth but the day of his coronation, the day he became God’s “Son” by becoming king.

If in its historical context Psalm 2:7 refers to King David, how can the Preacher apply it to Jesus in Hebrews 1:5?

This drops us into the interesting world of first century Jewish ways of interpreting Scripture. It is a discussion beyond the scope of our study but if you want to chase this further I recommend a study by Don Curtis the location of which I have given you in the footnotes.<sup>2</sup>

Briefly put, the Preacher is employing a distinct mode of Scripture interpretation called *Remez* which in Hebrew means “hint”. The idea behind *Remez* is that through words, phrases and other elements in a passage God hints at truths that extend beyond the historical-grammatical context of the passage. Another way to think of this form of interpretation is that the New Testament author under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is lead to see how an Old Testament passage corresponds to a New Testament truth. What an Old Testament passage “hints” at is brought forth in the New Testament.

Though Psalm 2:7 was not a prediction of the Messiah per say, it contained a “hint” of what would be true about the Messiah. The points of connection between Psalm 2:7 and Hebrews 1:5 are the words “Son”, “today”, “begotten”. Just as David was “begotten” as God’s “Son” on the “day” he was enthroned as king of Israel so in the fullest and most complete sense of all these ideas, Jesus was “begotten” as God’s “Son” on the “day” He was enthroned as king of all things when He was seated at the right hand of the Majesty. What David was and represents in his status as a Son, Jesus is now in the fullest, most complete sense possible. Jesus is *The* Son in the fullness of what it means to be the Son; after making purification for sins He was exalted at the right hand, enthroned as king who will inherit all things. Thus He became that much more superior to angels as the *exalted* Son.

Two thoughts in closing: Jesus’ journey corresponds to our journey and embodies the ultimate message of Hebrews – those who endure will inherit. Secondly, our imaginations should be fired up to picture the dynamic relationship between the Father and the Son. Far from a static, robotic relationship there exists a dramatic, visceral relationship of submission, suffering, endurance, triumph, celebration, love, anticipation.... Far from being dry theology, we have been given a “hint” of the cosmic drama vastly more intense and vivid than any epic tale from the mind of man.

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<sup>1</sup> For a clear, concise study of Psalm 2 go to bible.org > Resources > Books > Psalms > Study Helps and Related - Tom Constable

<sup>2</sup> <http://bible.org/node/545>