

**Text: Heb 1.7-12**

The writer of Hebrews is working towards a goal. He began with a proposition (vv. 1-4) which places the exalted Christ on the throne at the right hand of God.

According to one of my commentaries, the goal of the first section of the book is Heb 4.14-16, “let us hold fast our confession” and “let us draw near with confidence.”

In other words, he wants us to develop a close, faithful, ardent relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, with God the Father, and the Spirit. This is the place of blessing, the

To that end, he begins with an extended section of exposition, which serves to prove the high value placed in our Lord Jesus Christ in the first four verses.

Last week we talked about “The More Excellent Name”

This week, our subject is:

### *The Imperishable Son*

The focus of the proposition was the final revelation in *a Son*. The first revelation came through the prophets but was often mediated by angels as we saw last week. This leads to a series of quotations from the Scripture to highlight the contrast between the Son and angels.

In the first set of quotations, the contrast with angels was about *status* — the Son is higher than angels by virtue of his *Glorious Name*.

The quotations we will look at today are about *nature* — the Son is higher than angels by virtue of his *Eternal Nature*.

For us, the emphasis focuses our attention on what it should be. Angels are very powerful, higher than man, spectacular figures as compared to man, but... they are not sent to occupy our attention, they are sent to serve us and fulfill the will of God. In fact, our last message ended with the line commanding angels to worship the Son. As they do, so should we.

Read Heb 1.5-14, text 7-12

**Proposition: The Son is our appropriate object of worship because he endures forever.**

## I. The creaturely nature of angels (7)

As we survey our outline, it will seem out of balance: one verse for point one, five for point two. Considering our subject matter, though, the message is perfectly balanced!

### A. Understanding the quotation

#### 1. Comparing Hebrew and Greek

##### a. Ps 104.4, reflecting the Hebrew:

Ps 104.4 He makes the winds His messengers,  
Flaming fire His ministers.

##### b. My translation of the LXX:

Who is making his angels wind  
and his liturgists [priestly servants] flames of fire

#### 2. The grammar is uncertain

a. In the Gk, you could turn the two objects around: His messengers [are] wind; His ministers [are] flaming fire

b. From what I understand of the Heb, it is possible to do the same in Heb.

#### 3. The point of the Psalm in original: God in his greatness in control over all creation

##### a. The Heb. Targum on the Psalm puts it this way:

“Who maketh His messengers swift as winds, His ministers strong as flaming fire.”<sup>1</sup>

##### b. The KJV follows this tradition:

Who maketh his angels spirits;  
his ministers a flaming fire:

<sup>1</sup> F. W. Farrar, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews, With Notes and Introduction.*, Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893), 37.

## c. Westcott's comment:

"The thought is that where men at first see only material objects and forms of nature there God is present, fulfilling His will through His servants under the forms of elemental action."<sup>2</sup>

## d. The Rabbis taught that God could make his angels assume any form he wished

The Angels of Wind and of Fire  
 Chant only one hymn, and expire  
 With the song's irresistible stress;  
 Expire in their rapture and wonder,  
 As harp-strings are broken asunder  
 By music they throb to express.<sup>3</sup>

## B. Emphasizing the teaching

## 1. Whatever the grammar, the author of Hebrews is following this notion:

- a. Angels are something like the wind
- b. Angels are something like flaming fire

## 2. What does this mean?

- a. Angels are creatures, high, noble, glorious: but creatures
- b. Angels are "evanescent" an "ephemeral" – they are finite beings subject to change

But now for the Son

**II. The eternal nature of the Son (8-12)**

## A. The Son rules forever (8-9)

1. Psalm 45 is a wedding psalm (Header: "A Maskil of the sons of Korah. A Song of Love.")
  - a. The king is unknown,<sup>4</sup> but very startling language is used

"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever"

<sup>2</sup> Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1903), 25.

<sup>3</sup> Longfellow, "Sandalphon," *Birds of Passage*.

<sup>4</sup> Could be Solomon, probably someone in the Davidic line.

1) Bruce commented on “the hyperbole of oriental court style” but goes on to say a son of the Davidic line seen as reigning in God’s place<sup>5</sup>

2) Kidner comments:

on some versions which make “O God” “to something less startling. But the Hebrew resists any softening here, and it is the New Testament, not the new versions, which does it justice when it uses it to prove the superiority God’s Son to the very angels”<sup>6</sup>

3) The grammar is called “the Vocative case” — addressing the subject directly

“of the Son ... your throne, O God...”

b. As powerful as this is, it isn’t the main point of the passage or its use in Hebrews

2. The angels are temporary: but the Son rules forever

a. His authority is eternal

b. He rules more than physical creation; he rules the spirit world as well (human as well as angelic)

1) His kingdom a righteous kingdom (scepter “which is” righteousness)

2) His heart loves righteousness and hates wickedness

3. The Son, therefore, has a special anointing

a. Above his companions:

1) Could refer to men alone (many parallel uses of the term in Hebrews)

<sup>5</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 60.

<sup>6</sup> Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 172.

2) Yet here, the focus is on angels, who are God's powerful ministers fulfilling the Son's will

b. The anointing is as at a celebration (not a coronation)

The whole context we've been looking at assumes the seating of Christ at the Father's right hand: this is another link to that moment.

B. The Son exists forever (10-12)

1. "One more thing..." — the author adds another quotation with "And..."

a. The quotation is from Ps 102.25-27, following the LXX with some adjustments

b. We move from the "exalted king" to something more

"A new quotation adds a fresh thought. The exalted king, who is truly man, is also above all finite beings."<sup>7</sup>

2. Layering the contrasts as a "thought poem"

They will perish	(future tense)
But you remain	(present tense)
They will all wear out like a garment	(future tense)
You will roll them up like a robe	(future tense)
Like a garment they will be changed	(future tense)
But you remain the same	(present tense)
And your years will never end	(future tense) <sup>8</sup>

"Ps 102:25–27 has been introduced into the argument because it supports the radical distinction between the transitoriness of the created order and the eternal, unchangeable nature of the Son (cf. Schröger, 69). Heaven and earth, the realm of the angels, both belong to the created order, which will change and decay."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 27.

<sup>8</sup> David Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary 35 (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Publ. Group, 2010), 183.

<sup>9</sup> William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1991), 31.

- a. Verse 10 gives a sort of proposition: You Lord, created all things
- b. Then comes the contrast of thoughts
  - 1) All created things will perish: You, Lord, will remain (two ends)
  - 2) Present tense: the things which are – You remain, You remain the same

Compare the present tense in the preamble:

And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. (Heb 1.3a)

- 3) What is the future of Creation?
  - a) Creation wears out like a garment
  - b) The old garment will be changed
- 4) The focus: You will roll up creation like a discarded robe

“The point of the quotation is to stress the impermanence of creation as contrasted with the eternity of the Son.”<sup>10</sup>

### Conclusion:

**Proposition:** The Son is our appropriate object of worship because he endures forever.

Worship: “1 : to honor or reverence as a divine being or supernatural power  
2 : to regard with great or extravagant respect, honor, or devotion”<sup>11</sup>

We cannot say we worship if we say the right theological words but don't live the right spiritual life:

And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom.  
You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;

<sup>10</sup> Allen, *Hebrews*, 184.

<sup>11</sup> Frederick C. Mish, ed., *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).