

Text: Heb 1.13-14

We come today to the end of the first expository section in Hebrews. Our author bases the assertions of his prologue on the Scriptures. He uses seven quotations to make his point.

The first was from Psalm 2.7

This last is from Psalm 110.1

These quotations are set off by almost identical introductory phrases:

Heb 1:5 For to which of the angels did He ever say...

Heb 1:13 But to which of the angels has He ever said...

“As the introductory and concluding citations in the series, Ps 2:7 and Ps 110:1 are bonded together as the framework both of the Church’s confession and of the writer’s exposition of that confession.”¹

These Psalms about the Son form much of the basis of everything in the book of Hebrews. That’s why we read them in our Scripture reading today.

Now, let’s recall some “basic Hebrews introduction” matter: Why did the author write? To whom did he write?

Hebrews addresses the worries and fears of a group of Christians, formerly Jews who were tempted to abandon overt Christianity in favor of a retreat to Judaism.

Their temptation apparently came from increasing persecution and a perception of (relative) safety in Judaism. (No doubt long held tradition and habits played a part as well. So many things in church life upset old ways.)

What is the answer to this temptation?

This is my Son, hear ye him!

That’s really what Hebrews is saying. And it is a message for us to. Our pressures and temptations are different, but the world demands conformity to its ways and its thinking. Many Christians adopt a less zealous way of living to “make things easier” and have fewer conflicts in the world.

¹ William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1991), 31–33.

But. *Are they listening to the Son?*

Read Heb 1.5-14, text 13-14

Proposition: The speech of the Son produces the salvation we must heed (and which angels serve).

I. His Position

A. The importance of Psalm 110 for the book of Hebrews

“Psalm 110 is crucial in the argument of Hebrews because of its king-priest motif. Psalm 110 is quoted or alluded to 12 times in the epistle (1:3, 13; 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:3, 11, 17, 21; 8:1; 10:13; 12:2). This psalm forms the foundation of Hebrews 7–10, the central doctrinal section which elaborates on the nature of the Son’s high priesthood.”²

B. The use of Psalm 110 in Heb 1

Heb 1.3 ... When He had made purification of sins, **He sat down** at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

NAU Heb 1.13 But to which of the angels has He ever said, “**SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET**”?

1. The passage is a *messianic* passage
2. Jesus quoted it as such (Mt 22.41-44), using the Messianic interpretation with no challenge from the Jews
 - a. He asked how it was that David called the Messiah Lord

Ps 110.1 The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand
Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”

- b. They could not answer Him: they accepted that the Psalm spoke of the Messiah
- c. They didn’t accept that it spoke of Him (though clearly Jesus intended them to take it that way)

² Thomas Kem Oberholtzer, “The Warning Passages in Hebrews Part 1 (of 5 Parts): The Eschatological Salvation of Hebrews 1:5–2:5,” *Bibliotheca Sacra: Dallas Theological Seminary* 145, no. 577 (1988): 91.

C. The contrast between angels and the Son

1. He sits
2. They stand
3. Jewish tradition and the Scriptures reflect that angels stand to serve:

Lk 1.19 The angel answered and said to him, “I am Gabriel, **who stands in the presence of God**, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.

Rev 8.2 And I saw **the seven angels who stand before God**, and seven trumpets were given to them.

Enoch 20.1 And these are the names of the holy angels who **watch**.² Uriel, one of the holy angels, who is over the world and over Tartarus.³ Raphael,⁴ one of the holy angels, who is over the spirits of men. Raguel, one of the holy angels who takes vengeance on the world of the luminaries.⁵ Michael, one of the holy angels, to wit, he that is set over the best part of mankind and over chaos.⁶ Saraqâêl, one of the holy angels, who is set over the spirits, who sin in the spirit.⁷ Gabriel, one of the holy angels, who is over Paradise and the serpents and the Cherubim.⁸ Remiel, one of the holy angels, whom God set over those who rise.

Tobit 12.15 I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who **stand ready** and enter before the glory of the Lord.”

Dan 7.10 “A river of fire was flowing And coming out from before Him; Thousands upon thousands were attending Him, And **myriads upon myriads were standing before Him**; The court sat, And the books were opened.

“The most exalted angels are those whose privilege it is to ‘stand in the presence of God’ like Gabriel (Luke 1:19), but none of them has ever been invited to sit before him, still less to sit in the place of unique honor at his right hand. Their standing posture betokens their promptness to execute his commands, or simply to abide his pleasure.”³

³ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 64.

D. Formality of oriental courts

1. Recall how Queen Esther could not approach the king (her husband) unless invited or permitted
2. Even in our modern era, certain protocols must follow when meeting our king

Our governor-general reached out and took the Queen's elbow as she slipped slightly as they went down some steps. "Mr Johnston said he was simply concerned about the Queen's safety and made the judgement that a breach of protocol was appropriate 'to be sure that there was no stumble'."⁴

- Don't speak unless spoken to
- Arrive early, before the queen (or king) does
- Don't touch the queen (or king) unless she (or he) offers the hand
- Don't turn your back on the queen (or king)

E. The significance of the seated Son

1. He is in charge
2. He is in waiting ... "until I make your enemies your footstool"
 - a. In Joshua 10.24, the elders of Israel literally stood with their feet on the necks of conquered kings
 - b. The promise remains yet unfulfilled (2.8, "But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him")
 - c. The time is indefinite, but certain

"Angels stand and serve, but the Son sits and rules."⁵

⁴ "Regal Rules: The Dos and Don'ts for Meeting the Queen," *BBC News*, July 20, 2017, sec. UK, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-40668579>.

⁵ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Heb 1.13.

II. Their Work

- A. Verse 14 is a rhetorical question — a “yes” is the expected answer
1. In a sense, it summarizes everything he has said from v. 5 – v. 13
 2. The contrast again: He rules; they serve
- B. The kind of service angels offer
1. They are ministering spirits (liturgical ministry)
 - a. In Heb 1.7, the same word is used
 - b. The Gk word implies sacred (liturgical) service
 2. Their purpose is to serve (“deaconing”)
 - a. The *διακονος* is a household slave
 - b. The service is that done behind the scenes to keep the household operating
- C. In particular, the angels served in giving God’s message to the prophets (see v.1)
1. Jewish tradition and Scripture, as we saw, involved angels in this process
 2. But note: Angels are in the background, not the foreground
 - a. False religions (Islam, Mormonism) put angels in the foreground
 - b. False religions have no Spirit, to move holy men; they have no Son, who is the revelation → consequently, they elevate angels

“Communication between God and man has to be explained somehow, and if God is transcendently inaccessible then it is logical that intermediate beings like angels should be called to help.”⁶

⁶ Gerald Lewis Bray, *God Has Spoken: A History of Christian Theology* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2014), 726.

3. Their work focuses on this purpose: “to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation”

“As if one should say, for this purpose (saith he) He employs them; this is the office of Angels, to minister to God for our salvation. So that it is an angelical work, to do all for the salvation of the brethren: or rather it is the work of Christ Himself, for He indeed saves as Lord, but they as servants.”⁷

III. Our Destiny

A. The identity of those for whom the angels serve

those who will inherit salvation

1. Salvation from sin is the object of the work of the Son
2. Salvation from sin is complete when the Son sat down
3. What does salvation mean here?

B. The salvation that awaits

1. Theologians call it “eschatological salvation”

Rm 13.11 ¶ *Do* this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed.

1 Pt 1.5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

2. The angels serve us who believe to bring to an end that salvation Jesus promised

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⁷ Chrysostom, Homily 3 Hebrews 1.6-8

Conclusion:

Proposition: The speech of the Son produces the salvation we must heed (and which angels serve).

In the first two verses, God spoke in the prophets (by angels, Heb. tradition) and in the Son, the new tradition.

The Hebrews were wavering, should they go back? They are going back to the old, to the inferior, and to the ineffective. The old had a place, but it was a way station, not a destination.

What remains: Listen to the Son.

“As God had no greater messenger than his Son, he had no further message beyond the gospel.”⁸

Hear Ye Him!

⁸ Bruce, *Hebrews*, 65.