

Seven quotations – the first five

Quotation 1 PSALM 2

- Jesus is God's unique son

- Sonship here means "representation"

Quotation 2 2 SAMUEL 7

- A reference to Jesus as the final King of an everlasting kingdom

Quotation 3 DEUTERONOMY 32

- Jesus is to be admired and worshipped by angels

- Fulfilment of God's purposes

- Refers to the period between the resurrection-ascension and His second coming

What the writer has said in 1:1–4 is actually to be found in the Old Testament. We have here seven quotations from the Old Testament.

1. **Verse 5a quotes Psalm 2.** *For to which of the angels did he ever say, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father'?* It confirms a point in 1:1–4. Jesus is God's unique Son.

What do we mean when we call Jesus God's 'Son'? The word has more than one idea to it and different biblical writers use the word with different emphases. In Psalm 2 'sonship' mainly means representation. God's king **represents** him. In the context of Psalm 2 and Hebrews 1, the phrase 'This day I have become your Father' or (more literally) 'This day I have begotten you' means 'This day I have put you into position as my representative'. The time of Jesus' becoming God's 'Son' in this passage is the time of the resurrection. Of course Jesus was **already** God's Son (and Hebrews 1:8 will link sonship with eternal deity) but that is not the point here in verse 5. It is parallel to Matthew 28:18. At the time of the resurrection, Jesus said to his disciples, 'All authority is given to me...'

2. **Verse 5b quotes 2 Samuel 7.** *Or did he ever say, 'I will be for him a Father, and he shall be for me a Son'?* The original words refer to Solomon, but the same passage refers to an 'everlasting kingdom' ¹. The kings descending in the line of king David were anticipations and forerunners of Jesus, 'the Son of David'. Jesus is **the king, the supreme Son of God**. The kings in Jerusalem were temporary rough outlines of what God wanted, but they were not the final King. The writer asks: to which of the angels did God ever reveal a plan like this?

3. **Verse 6 quotes Deuteronomy 32.** *And when he again brings the firstborn into the world he says, 'And let all the angels of God worship him.'* Jesus is God; he is to be worshipped by the angels. In Deuteronomy 32:43–47 Moses is reaching the end of a song in which he has been praising God for his faithfulness to Israel despite Israel's weakness and unfaithfulness. Our standard Hebrew text seems to have lost some phrases, but the original wording can be deduced from the Greek translation and a Hebrew text of Deuteronomy found at Qumran. Whatever the exact wording might have been in Deuteronomy 32, it is clear that it was a line of poetry in the Old Testament calling upon the angels to worship God in honour of his powerful judgements in history. The song is fulfilled in the kingship of Jesus. Even the angels are admiring and worshipping Jesus as they see him fulfilling God's purposes set forth programmatically in Deuteronomy 32. A special occasion was in mind. Hebrews 1:6 must be referring to the period between the resurrection-ascension and the second coming of Jesus. It **begins** at the time of the resurrection-ascension but it is still continuing. Jesus was put above the angels ¹. The heavenly beings worship him. Jesus was 'seen by angels, believed on in the

¹ 2 Samuel 7:16

¹ 1:4, Ephesians 1:21; 1 Peter 3:22

world' ². Deuteronomy 32:43 is fulfilled. Shout for joy, you heavens before him. Worship him, you angels.

² 1 Timothy 3:16

**Quotation 4
PSALM 104**

• Jesus contrasted with the angels

4. **Verse 7 quotes Psalm 104.** *And on the one hand concerning the angels he says, 'He makes his angels winds, and his servants he makes into flames of fire.'* There is a strong contrast between Hebrews 1:7 (which quotes Psalm 104) and Hebrews 1:8–9 (which quotes Psalm 45). The Greek has two little words which I can translate '**On the one side** concerning the angels...**But on the other side** concerning the Son...'. The writer is still contrasting Jesus and the angels.

The psalmist – and the author of Hebrews – refers to the occasions when God took visible appearance. In the Old Testament it appears that God often took some kind of visible shape. The figure of Genesis 32:24 is in different places called 'God' or 'a man' or 'an angel'. There is reason to think it was an angel appearing in man-like form to represent God. But when God appeared as wind and fire, is the very 'stuff' of God becoming visible? No, no one has seen God at any time ¹. Hebrews 1:7 has the explanation: 'He makes his angels winds, and his servants he makes into flames of fire.' The 'stuff' that is becoming visible is not the divine nature. It is an angel taking forms which represent God. Angels are merely servants representing God. They hide themselves. Mostly they are invisible. When they do appear it may be as fire or wind. You can hardly tell an angel is present. They do not display their own glory.

¹ John 1:18

• Angels – on the one hand -

• Are mostly invisible

• And do not display their own glory

**Quotation 5
PSALM 45**

• Jesus – on the other hand –

• Rules as king of the universe

• And is vastly superior to angels

5. **Verses 8–9 quote Psalm 45.** *But concerning the Son, he says, 'Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever, and the sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness, and you hate lawlessness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions.'* The two contrasting quotations ('On the one hand...But on the other hand...') make the point that Jesus has been given the universe to rule. He has (since his resurrection) 'inherited' the world. Jesus has a sceptre; he reigns as king. Flowing through the whole of these references is the obvious fact that the Son of God, the divine Messiah, is vastly greater than the angels. The angels are his admirers and worshippers. He is not one of their number but is supremely exalted above them ¹.

¹ 1:6



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