

Seven quotations – the last three

• *Jesus is not merely an 'angel'*

Quotation 5 PSALM 45 continued

• *Jesus is a divine king*

• *A royal wedding psalm – exaggerated for an earthly king but fulfilled in Jesus – the eternal king*

• *Jesus has assistants – the angels!*

• *The anointing of the Spirit*

Quotation 6 PSALM 102

• *A psalm showing that God is in charge of the process of corruption on the earth*

Our writer is arguing that the greatness of the Son of God is vastly superior to any greatness we might see in the angels. It seems that this particular community were being tempted with the idea that Jesus was only an angel. It would have made life easier for Christians being persecuted by Jews if they could have stayed within the framework of Judaism but regarded Jesus as an angel or a very important messenger from God. But Jesus is not merely an 'angel'. The angels worship him! Clearly this was a point that needed to be put forthrightly and powerfully to this community of Hebrew Christians.

Let us continue to consider the forty-fifth psalm, quoted in Hebrews 1:8–9. It is about a majestic king and a queen. The psalmist is conscious that he is inspired to say high and great things about the king ^{א1}. He is even divine. 'Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever,' says the psalmist. He rules in justice ^{א2}, and has a fierce hate towards sin ^{א3}. As a result God rewards him with joy ^{א4}. He is fragrant and attractive in his clothing ^{א5}. His wealth is seen in his homes and his music-making ^{א6}. The king has sweet companions and a queen ^{א7}.

The psalm must have been written for a royal wedding, no doubt of one of the Davidic kings. Yet it has extraordinarily exaggerated language (a king; the most beautiful person ever seen; nations conquered by him; a divine nature; an eternal throne; influential children throughout the world; a name remembered for ever). The writer must have thought the earthly king was a pale shadow of God's future King. The writer of our letter to the Hebrews sees its fulfilment in Jesus. The Son of God – our Lord Jesus Christ – is a divine Son. Sonship is now seen to imply deity, as well as representation. The divine Son is a king in an eternal kingdom of righteousness.

In the original of this song, the 'companions' were no doubt assistants at the marriage, but for the author of Hebrews the 'companions' must surely be the angels.

Jesus has assistants too – the angels! What is the 'oil of gladness' that Jesus has above the angels? It is the highest level of the receiving of the Spirit, the anointing of the Spirit for providing resurrection glory. Our psalm is an amazingly rich and warm description of Jesus, our Saviour, God's anointed One, the royal lover and bridegroom.

6. Hebrews 1:10–12 quotes Psalm 102:25–27. It says:

¹⁰ *And, 'You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands.*

¹¹ *They will perish but you remain.*

They will all like a garment become old.

¹² *You will roll them up like a robe;*

like a garment they will be changed.

But you remain the same, and your years will never end.'

In the psalm, the psalmist is praying that he might survive the threat of death that faces him ^{א1}. This leads him to consider the greatness of God as Creator ^{א2}. The psalmist was conscious of the frailty of the earth. It is in a captivity from which it cannot break free. It cannot achieve its full potential. Its resources are deteriorating. The psalmist could see where it was all going. 'They will perish...They will all like a garment become old...You will roll them up like a robe'. The suggestion is that God is in charge of this process of corruption. It is his verdict upon a world which is the home of sinful man. When man fell the universe fell with him. It was

א1 Psalm 45:1–5

א2 Psalm 45:6b

א3 Psalm 45:7a

א4 Psalm 45:7b

א5 Psalm 45:8

א6 Psalm 45:8

א7 Psalm 45:9

א1 Psalm

102:23–24

א2 Psalm

102:25–27

• ‘Changed’ – a hint that a new world will replace the old one

• The creator of the new heavens and earth will be Jesus

**Quotation 7
PSALM 110**

• The question repeated

• Jesus’ unique kingship

• The most quoted Old Testament passage

• The Messiah, no mere angel, has total control and one day – the day of total victory will come!

God’s judgement upon humankind. He fell; his world fell also. At the same time the psalmist knew that God was not subject to decay. He had imposed a sentence of decay upon the earth, but he himself has no involvement in that decay. ‘You remain...you remain the same, and your years will never end.’ The psalm envisages that the decay will come to a dramatic end. They will all like a garment become old. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. The world will come to a terminus. The word ‘changed’ is a hint that an old world will be replaced by a new world.

Our letter to the Hebrews applies all of this to our Lord Jesus Christ. They were the psalmist’s words to God as his self-encouragement when he was praying in a time of life-threatening need. But our letter applies it all to Jesus. Jesus is the ‘Yahweh’ who is mentioned so many times in the psalm ^{□1}. He is Lord over the beginning of creation. He is Lord over the end of creation. Jesus will be the One who brings the world to an end. ‘You will roll them up...,’ said the psalm-writer and Hebrews applies its words to Jesus. He is Lord throughout time. He is Lord of the new creation. The writer implies that Jesus will be the Creator of the new heavens and new earth in which righteousness has its home. Creation will be restored, and Jesus will be the one who restores it.

7. **Hebrews 1:13 quotes Psalm 110.** The string of quotations ends in the same way that it began. Verse 5 began: ‘or to which of the angels did he ever say...?’ Hebrews 1:13 asks the same question again: *To which of the angels did God ever say...?* A major purpose of the seven quotations in 1:5–13 is to show the superiority of Christ above the angels, and to put down any interpretation of Jesus which sees him as merely an angel.

To which of the angels did God ever say, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’? Again, this confirms Jesus’ unique kingship from the Old Testament. Much of Hebrews is a meditation upon the way in which Psalm 110 applies to Jesus and his people ^{□1}. Its use goes back to Jesus himself ^{□2}. It is in fact the Old Testament passage most widely quoted in the New Testament (see also 1 Corinthians 15:25; Acts 2:34–35; and many allusions throughout the New Testament). In Psalm 110 (the title of which declares it to have been written by King David), David meditates upon the way in which Yahweh, the God of Israel, has given authority to the coming Messiah. The perfect Priest-King, God’s Messiah (represented by David himself), is reigning in Jerusalem, but there are enemies all around him; the day of total victory has not yet come. Yet the Messiah has total control in the midst of his enemies ^{□3}. He also has a people who are utterly committed to him. They will be ‘willingness itself’ in the day when he puts forth his power. But nothing like this could ever be said of any angel! It is Jesus who is God’s divine King and no one else.

□1 Psalm 102:1, 12, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22

□1 5:6; 7:17, 21; and phrases in 8:1; 10:12; 12:2
□2 Matthew 22:41–45; Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44

□3 Psalm 110:2
□2 1:2



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Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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