

Message Two: Laying the Foundation, Part II

Hebrews 1:5-14 — Understanding Hebrews Series, Part 2

By Escape the Mustard Tree

Introduction

Last week we opened the Book of Hebrews and found that chapter one is not a throat-clearing before the "real" content of the letter begins — it is the foundation the whole letter is built on. We saw that Hebrews was written to genuine believers, not to convince the lost to get saved but to press the saved on toward maturity. And we spent most of our time in one verse — Hebrews 1:5 — and one Old Testament Psalm — Psalm 2 — where God announces the coronation of His Son: "Today I have begotten You." The Son was begotten for a throne.

That leaves us with six more Old Testament quotations still sitting in chapter one, verses 5 through 14. And I want to tell you up front: these are not filler. The author of Hebrews doesn't waste ink. Every one of these quotations is doing the same work — building a single, unified case for why the Son is greater than the angels. And once we see why that comparison matters, the whole chapter opens up into something much bigger than a Christology lesson. It becomes a chapter about who is going to rule the earth.

That's where we're headed this morning. Let's pick up where we left off, in the middle of Hebrews 1:5.

I. A Second Son-Text — "I Will Be to Him a Father"

Look again at the full verse. Hebrews 1:5: "For to which of the angels did He ever say: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You'? And again: 'I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son'?"

We covered the first half last week — the quotation from Psalm 2. But notice the author isn't finished. He immediately reaches for a second Old Testament text and lays it right alongside the first: "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son." That line comes from 2 Samuel chapter seven, and it's worth going back to see exactly what's being quoted.

Second Samuel 7 records the prophet Nathan delivering a message to King David. David wants to build God a house — a temple. God's answer is a reversal: instead of David building God a house, God is going to build David a house — a dynasty, a household, a lineage of kings. Listen to verses 12 through 14: "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son."

Now, on the surface, that promise is about Solomon. Solomon was David's immediate son, and Solomon did build the temple. But watch what God says next: "the throne of his kingdom forever." Solomon's throne did not last forever. Solomon's kingdom split in two after his own son Rehoboam's reign, and the throne of David sat empty in Jerusalem for the last time roughly 2,500 years ago. Whatever this promise ultimately means, it cannot be exhausted by Solomon.

That's precisely why the author of Hebrews reaches for this verse and applies it to Jesus. There is a greater Son of David in view here — one whose kingdom really will have no end, in fulfillment of what the angel Gabriel told Mary in Luke 1: "He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Solomon was the type. Christ is the reality the type was pointing toward all along.

II. Sonship Means Rulership — And Why the Angels Keep Showing Up

Here's where something important comes together. Notice what this 2 Samuel passage teaches us about sonship: sonship implies heirship. God tells David his son will inherit a kingdom, a throne, a house. We already saw this back in verse 2 of Hebrews 1 — the Son has been "appointed heir of all things." Now here it is again, confirmed from a second Old Testament witness.

But there's a second implication buried in the same promise, one just as important: sonship implies rulership. A throne isn't a decoration — it's a seat of authority. Look ahead for a moment to verse 8, where the author quotes yet another Psalm and has the Father say directly to the Son: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom." Sons don't just inherit wealth in this letter — they inherit a scepter. They rule.

Now here's the question that should be nagging at you: why does the author keep comparing the Son to angels to make this point? Why not just compare Him to other kings, or to Moses, or to the prophets? Why angels, specifically, seven times in fourteen verses?

The answer is one word, and once you see it, you will not be able to unsee it in the rest of this letter: regality. This entire comparison — the Son versus the angels — is about who gets to rule the earth. And the reason that comparison even makes sense is that angels, in Scripture, are themselves called "sons of God." Look at Job 1:6: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them." Job 38:7, describing creation: "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" Psalm 89:6: "For who in the heavens can be compared to the LORD? Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened to the LORD?"

So angels are sons of God too. And that's exactly why the comparison in Hebrews 1 carries so much weight. The author isn't comparing Christ to some random category of being. He is comparing the Son who was begotten for a throne to the only other class of beings in Scripture who share the title "son of God." And his conclusion is emphatic: no angel, however exalted, however ancient, has ever been told "You are My Son, today I have begotten You," and no angel has ever been promised an *everlasting* throne. **The Son has been.**

This is exactly why the earthly ministry of Jesus provoked the reaction it did the moment He claimed this title for Himself. Think about who understood the stakes of "Son of God" and reacted violently to it. At His trial, the high priest demanded: "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" (Matthew 26:63). While He hung on the cross, the crowd mocked Him with the very words: "You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matthew 27:40), and again, "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God'" (v. 43). Even Satan understood the claim well enough to test it directly in the wilderness: "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread" (Matthew 4:3), and "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down" (v. 6). Unclean spirits confessed it in terror: "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" (Matthew 8:29); "You are the Son of God" (Mark 3:11). And at the foot of the cross, a Roman centurion — a man with no stake in Jewish theology — looked at what he had just witnessed and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:54).

None of these people — the high priest, the mockers, Satan, the demons, the centurion — treated "Son of God" as a mild religious compliment. They all understood it as a claim to the throne. Sonship means rulership. That's what was on trial at Calvary, every bit as much as the question of blasphemy.

III. The Present Rulers of the Earth — Fallen Angels

So if Christ is heir of all things, and if sonship means rulership, here's the uncomfortable question the author of Hebrews is quietly setting up for us: if the Son is the rightful ruler of the earth, who is ruling the earth right now? Because it certainly isn't Him — not yet, not visibly.

The answer, according to Scripture, is angels — fallen ones. Paul tells the Corinthians plainly that "the god of this age has blinded" the minds of unbelievers (2 Corinthians 4:4). Jesus Himself, on the night before His death, referred to Satan as "the ruler of this world" (John 14:30). Paul again, in Ephesians: "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). And when Satan tempted Christ in the wilderness, showing Him "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory," he said, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4:8-9) — an offer that only makes sense if those kingdoms were, in some real sense, currently his to give.

This is why the author of Hebrews will go on to say, in the very next chapter, that God "has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels" (Hebrews 2:5). Notice the phrase — the world to come. Not this present world. This present world, right now, lies under the dominion of fallen angelic powers who usurped a rule that was never rightfully theirs. And this is why Hebrews 2:9 can say that Christ "was made a little lower than the angels" — not in His nature, not in His worth, but in this one specific respect: He is not, at this moment, exercising the rule that belongs to Him. He purchased the inheritance at Calvary. He has not yet taken possession of it.

Right now, the Son who made the angels, the Son who is heir of all things, the Son whose throne is "forever and ever," sits at the Father's right hand — waiting. No angel has ever been invited to that seat. Angels serve; they don't sit. But the Son waits there deliberately, patiently, until, in the words of Psalm 110 quoted later in this very letter, His enemies are made His footstool. That waiting is itself part of the argument. It tells you His reign is certain and it tells you it is not yet.

IV. "Let All the Angels of God Worship Him" — Psalm 97

Now we come to the third Old Testament quotation, in Hebrews 1:6: "But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: 'Let all the angels of God worship Him.'" This is drawn from Psalm 97, and the timing detail in that opening phrase — "when He again brings" — is not incidental. It's pointing forward, to a second bringing-in, a future event.

Psalm 97 opens with a refrain that repeats through the whole psalm: "The LORD reigns; let the earth rejoice." That's not a description of the present age — go outside and look at the state of the world, and you'll see it is manifestly not true that the earth as a whole is rejoicing under the acknowledged reign of the LORD. Psalm 97 is describing a future day, the day the earth is finally, visibly, universally subjected to God's rightful King.

And in that day, the Psalm says something remarkable: "Worship Him, all you gods." The Hebrew word behind "gods" here is the same word used elsewhere for the spiritual powers behind the pagan nations — the very "principalities and powers" Paul warns us we wrestle against. The author of Hebrews, writing under inspiration, renders that word "angels" — because that's precisely who is meant. The very powers who presently rule the nations of the earth, who presently receive the worship of the pagan world in idol form, will one day be forced to bow before the Son they have spent all of human history usurping.

This is not a new pattern in Scripture — it's the same pattern God has already sworn to. Isaiah 45:23: "I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath." Paul quotes this same verse in Romans 14:11. And Paul applies it directly to Christ in Philippians 2:10 — "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth." Fallen angels are not exempt from that bow. They will not bow willingly. But they will bow.

V. "Winds... and a Flame of Fire" — Psalm 104

The fourth quotation follows immediately in verse 7: "And of the angels He says: 'Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire.'" This comes from Psalm 104, a psalm of David praising God as Creator — the God who "wraps Himself in light as with a garment," who "stretches out the heavens like a curtain," and who, in verse 4, "makes His angels spirits" — literally, winds — "His ministers a flame of fire."

Set this quotation right next to verse 8, where God says to the Son, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever." Do you feel the contrast the author is building? Angels are winds. Angels are flames. They are swift, they are powerful, they are servants dispatched to carry out errands — but they are

creatures, made things, tools in the hand of their Maker. The Son, by contrast, is addressed as God, seated on an eternal throne, holding a scepter of righteousness. One is a gust of wind sent to do a job. The other is the King the wind serves.

This is the same logic Paul uses in Colossians when he says of Christ, "by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers." Angels are on that list of created things. The Son who created them is not on the list — He is the one doing the creating. Winds and flames may be swift and mighty, but they answer to a throne. They do not sit on one.

VI. Regality — Tying the Thread Together

Now step back and look at what we have. Seven Old Testament quotations, all in one chapter, all making the same argument from different angles: the Son has been begotten for a throne (Psalm 2); the Son has been promised an eternal kingdom as David's greater Son (2 Samuel 7); angels — the only other beings called "sons of God" — will one day worship Him (Psalm 97); angels are mere winds and flames, servants, not sovereigns (Psalm 104); and — the author will go on to show in verses 10 through 13 — the Son laid the foundations of the earth in the beginning and will remain when the present heavens and earth are folded up like a garment, seated at the Father's right hand until His enemies become His footstool.

Every one of these quotations orbits the same center of gravity: who rules the earth. Hebrews chapter one is not primarily a chapter about Christ's nature, though it certainly teaches that. It is a chapter about Christ's regality — His rightful, coming, presently-unrealized reign over the earth that fallen angelic powers currently, illegitimately hold.

The whole Book of Hebrews moves toward a single goal: the coming Messianic Era, when Christ's present priestly ministry — interceding for believers in the heavenly sanctuary, "after the order of Aaron," on the basis of His own shed blood — will come to an end, and He will step forward as the great King-Priest "after the order of Melchizedek," seated simultaneously on His own throne in the heavens and on David's throne in Jerusalem. This is why Psalm 2:7 — "Today I have begotten You" — gets quoted a second time later in Hebrews, in chapter 5, right alongside Psalm 110's declaration, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." The same begetting that installs Him as King also installs Him as King-Priest. Sonship, kingship, and priesthood are bound together in this letter as a single package, all still future in their full realization, all still waiting.

This is precisely why the author of Hebrews will go on, in chapter 5, to say he has "many things to say" about this subject that are "hard to be uttered" because his readers are "dull of hearing" — spiritually lazy, stuck on milk when the letter is trying to feed them meat. What is that meat? It is exactly this: a mature understanding of Christ's coming reign, and of the staggering fact that believers are being invited to reign with Him — not as spectators watching from the stands, but as "joint heirs with Christ," in Paul's words from Romans 8. This is not a footnote to the gospel — *it is the gospel*. This is what an entire dispensation of history has been set aside to accomplish — the Holy Spirit, in the world today, gathering a people who will one day sit on the throne beside the King.

VII. Applying the Foundation, Part II

So what do we do with a chapter like this?

First — let the size of the claim land on you. This is not abstract theology floating somewhere above your life. Fallen powers presently, really, hold a dominion that does not belong to them. And the Son to whom you belong is not merely your personal Savior in some private, individualized sense — He is the rightful King of the whole earth, presently waiting, certainly coming.

Second — notice that the whole argument of this chapter hinges on comparison. The Son is set over against angels not because angels are unimportant, but because angels represent the highest, mightiest class of created being Scripture knows of — and even they do not compare. If the mightiest creatures in existence bow to Him, what does that say about anything else competing for your allegiance this week — money, reputation, comfort, fear? Whatever it is, it was made by the One who is currently waiting for the day every knee, of every rank of being, bows before Him.

Third — remember that this letter to the Hebrews was not preserved to just satisfy your curiosity about the future. It was written to move you from milk to meat, from spectator to participant. The same Spirit calling out a people for the Son's throne is calling you. The question this whole chapter is quietly asking you is not "do you believe Jesus is divine?" You already believe that. The question is: are you living now in light of the throne He is going to occupy — and the throne He has invited you to share?

Looking Ahead

Next week, we complete the remaining Old Testament quotations in Hebrews chapter one and tie together everything we have laid as foundation across these first two weeks, before turning into chapter two and the letter's first great warning — the warning against drifting.