

Hebrews

Introduction: God Has Spoken Fully and Finally in His Son

1:1 After God spoke long ago¹ in various portions² and in various ways³ to our ancestors⁴ through the prophets, 1:2 in these last days he has spoken to us in a son,⁵ whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he created the world.⁶ 1:3 The Son is⁷ the radiance of his glory and the representation of his essence, and he sustains all things by his powerful word,⁸ and so when he had accomplished cleansing for sins, *he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*⁹ 1:4 Thus he became¹⁰ so far better than the angels¹¹ he has inherited a name superior to theirs.

¹ tn Or “spoke formerly.”

² tn Or “parts.” The idea is that God’s previous revelation came in many parts and was therefore fragmentary or partial (L&N 63.19), in comparison with the final and complete revelation contained in God’s Son. However, some interpret πολυμερῶς (*polumerōs*) in Heb 1:1 to mean “on many different occasions” and would thus translate “many times” (L&N 67.11). This is the option followed by the NIV: “at many times and in various ways.” Finally, this word is also understood to refer to the different manners in which something may be done, and would then be translated “in many different ways” (L&N 89.81). In this last case, the two words πολυμερῶς and πολυτρόπως (*polutropōs*) mutually reinforce one another (“in many and various ways,” NRSV).

³ tn These two phrases are emphasized in Greek by being placed at the beginning of the sentence and by alliteration.

⁴ tn Grk “to the fathers.”

⁵ tn The Greek puts an emphasis on the quality of God’s final revelation. As such, it is more than an indefinite notion (“a son”) though less than a definite one (“the son”), for this final revelation is not just through any son of God, nor is the emphasis specifically on the person himself. Rather, the focus here is on the nature of the vehicle of God’s revelation: He is no mere spokesman (or prophet) for God, nor is he merely a heavenly messenger (or angel); instead, this final revelation comes through one who is intimately acquainted with the heavenly Father in a way that only a family member could be. There is, however, no exact equivalent in English (“in son” is hardly good English style).

⁶ tn The phrase *in a son* is the fulcrum of Heb 1:1-4. It concludes the contrast of God’s old and new revelation and introduces a series of seven descriptions of the Son. These descriptions show why he is the ultimate revelation of God.

⁷ tn Grk “the ages.” The temporal (ages) came to be used of the spatial (what exists in those time periods). See Heb 11:3 for the same usage.

⁸ tn Grk “who being...and sustaining.” Heb 1:1-4 form one skillfully composed sentence in Greek, but it must be broken into shorter segments to correspond to contemporary English usage, which does not allow for sentences of this length and complexity.

⁹ tn Grk “by the word of his power.”

¹⁰ tn An allusion to Ps 110:1, quoted often in Hebrews.

¹¹ tn Grk “having become.” This is part of the same sentence that extends from v. 1 through v. 4 in the Greek text.

¹² tn Most modern English translations attempt to make the comparison somewhat smoother by treating “name” as if it were the subject of the second element: “as the name

The Son Is Superior to Angels

1:5 For to which of the angels did God¹² ever say, “*You are my son! Today I have fathered you*”¹³ And in another place¹⁴ he says,¹⁵ “*I will be his father and he will be my son*”¹⁶ 1:6 But when he again brings¹⁷ his firstborn into the world, he says, “*Let all the angels of God worship him*”¹⁸ 1:7 And he says¹⁹ of the angels, “*He makes²⁰ his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire*”²¹ 1:8 but of²² the Son he says,²³ “*Your throne, O God, is forever and ever*”²⁴

he has inherited is superior to theirs” (cf. NAB, NIV, NRSV, CEV). However, the Son is the subject of both the first and second elements: “he became so far better”; “he has inherited a name.” The present translation maintains this parallelism even though it results in a somewhat more awkward rendering.

¹³ tn This comparison is somewhat awkward to express in English, but it reflects an important element in the argument of Hebrews: the superiority of Jesus Christ.

¹⁴ tn Grk “he”; the referent (God) has been specified in the translation for clarity.

¹⁵ tn Grk “I have begotten you.”

¹⁶ tn A quotation from Ps 2:7.

¹⁷ tn Grk “And again,” quoting another OT passage.

¹⁸ tn The words “he says” are not in the Greek text but are supplied to make a complete English sentence. In the Greek text this is a continuation of the previous sentence, but English does not normally employ such long and complex sentences.

¹⁹ tn Grk “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to me.”

²⁰ tn A quotation from 2 Sam 7:14 (cf. 1 Chr 17:13).

²¹ tn Or “And again when he brings.” The translation adopted in the text looks forward to Christ’s second coming to earth. Some take “again” to introduce the quotation (as in 1:5) and understand this as Christ’s first coming, but this view does not fit well with Heb 2:7. Others understand it as his exaltation/ascension to heaven, but this takes the phrase “into the world” in an unlikely way.

²² tn A quotation combining themes from Deut 32:43 and Ps 97:7.

²³ tn The Greek correlative conjunctions μέν and δέ (*men* and *de*) emphasize the contrastive parallelism of vs. 7 (what God says about the angels) over against vv. 8-9 and vv. 10-12 (what God says about the son).

²⁴ tn Grk “He who makes.”

²⁵ tn A quotation from Ps 104:4.

²⁶ tn Or “to.”

²⁷ tn The verb “he says” (λέγει, *legei*) is implied from the λέγει of v. 7.

²⁸ tn Or possibly, “Your throne is God forever and ever.” This translation is quite doubtful, however, since (1) in the context the Son is being contrasted to the angels and is presented as far better than they. The imagery of God being the Son’s throne would seem to be of God being his authority. If so, in what sense could this *not* be said of the angels? In what sense is the Son thus contrasted with the angels? (2) The μέν...δέ (*men...de*) construction that connects v. 7 with v. 8 clearly lays out this contrast: “On the one hand, he says of the angels...on the other hand, he says of the Son.” Thus, although it is grammatically possible that θεός (*theos*) in v. 8 should be taken as a predicate nominative, the context and the correlative conjunctions are decidedly against