

## Prayer

Almighty, gracious Lord and God; sometimes it seems as if things happen to us which are not part of Your will and purpose for us and we struggle to stay close to what is right and true. Take these dark moments and transform them by the power of Your Holy Spirit; and may Satan be defeated, and the suffering we endure be turned into glory for the sake of Your Kingdom. All praise to You, our Lord and God: AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: How we handle rejection

We have prayed this week for people who have difficulty in dealing with rejection. Jesus was Himself rejected on the Cross, but offered his life so that we might receive His love. Pray therefore that we will all have the courage to follow our Lord by offering love to those who reject us, what we stand for, and our beliefs. That is surely what He would have us do.

## Meditation

There is something in music which is indescribable;  
It has the power to deeply move the human soul,  
And minister to our feelings, spirit, mood, and heart.

There is something in colour which is inexpressible;  
We see the same thing in a million different ways  
In the ever-changing patterns of light which play around us!

There is something about flavour which is indefinable;  
A beautifully prepared dish delights our many senses,  
Uncovering emotions, passions, and even memories.

There is something about faith which lies beyond our faculties,  
For the human soul falls short in finding its true potential  
Without communicating, spirit to Spirit, with the One who made it.

So dance with impossibility, be at one with your Creator;  
May your soul be truly free to hear the heavenly music,  
See the sights of glory, and taste the heavenly banquet!

## Bible Study - Hebrews 1:5-7

<sup>5</sup> *To which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son; I have become Your Father today'? Or again, 'I will be a Father to Him, and He will be my Son'?* <sup>6</sup> *And again, when He leads the firstborn into the world, He says, 'Let all the angels of God worship Him.'* <sup>7</sup> *And He say of the angels, 'He makes His angels spirits, His servants of flames and of fire.'*

## Review

The letter to the Hebrews begins with a resounding affirmation of the nature and glory of Jesus, who he refers to as the Son of God (1:2). In order to prove this, he uses a series of seven texts from the Scriptures, which for him, were the Old Testament. The seven quotes take up all of the rest of chapter 1 of Hebrews and have only the briefest of introductory comments, so we are invited to read each of them and be convinced that the Son of God has indeed come; He is not an angel, but the truly divine Son of God come into the world for a purpose specifically designed by God.

Today, we have read the first four quotes from the Old Testament which follow the question at the beginning, 'to which of the angels did God ever say ... ?' (1:5); and tomorrow, we will read the last three quotes which follow the comment, 'but of the Son He says ...' (1:8). The existence of seven quotes is interesting, as this indicates completeness. Many people have suggested that these verses may have been a 'set' of Old Testament quotes used by people to defend

their faith. There is some evidence that early Christians gathered such groups of 'proof texts' to help them remember and discuss their faith, but it is impossible to know whether this group in Hebrews were borrowed from elsewhere, or whether the letter gave the early church a new resource to help it defend the faith!

The other important thing to bear in mind is that when we compare the quotes given here with the original Old Testament, they appear different. This is because Hebrews quotes a version of the Old Testament known as the 'Septuagint', which is a Greek translation of the ancient text, done in the century before Christ. Unfortunately, scholars back then understood the text in a very different way to today, and this has resulted in quite a few differences between what we read in Hebrews and the Old Testament versions of our own Bibles. However, given that the quotes are from the Septuagint, they are quoted accurately.

The first quote; 'You are my Son; I have become Your Father today' comes from Psalm 2:7. This verse has been used in many different ways over the centuries, but it is clear that the early church used this to refer to Jesus' resurrection, the day when the Father gave 'new birth' to the Son in resurrection glory! Here, therefore, the writer wants us to know that no angels have been raised to life; this has only happened to Jesus, God's Son. The second quote follows on quickly; 'I will be a Father to Him, and He will be my Son'. This comes from 2 Samuel 7:14 (and 1 Chron 17:13), and it is the only place in the letter to the Hebrews where the close relationship of 'Father' and 'Son' is emphasised. The Saviour was no angel or created being, however 'spiritual', but directly related to God the Father, and divine in nature.

The third quote is from Deuteronomy 32:43; 'Let all the angels of God worship Him.' Now, in Deuteronomy, the angels are clearly directed to worship God, and God alone. But before this quote, the writer of Hebrews tells us that this will happen when God brings His 'firstborn' into the world, which clearly means Jesus; and Luke 2:13 it tells us that there was a host of angels 'praising God' at Jesus' birth. Again, our Saviour is no angel, but one whom angels worship. Lastly, the quote "He makes His angels spirits, His servants of flames and of fire.' comes from Psalm 104:4, which tells us something about how the writer saw the work of angels. Theirs was not the same as the saving work of Jesus, but that of ministering in the spiritual realms, something emphasised by the classical symbols of the spiritual world, wind and fire (1:7), symbols we are used to use for reference to the Holy Spirit.

All these quotes have great meaning, both obviously and symbolically. Tomorrow, we will see what the writer says about the Son, by way of comparison!

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. What would be the value, and the dangers, of keeping a set of 'proof texts' which you believed encapsulated key elements of your faith
2. In your group, list what this passage tells us about angels, and what it tells us about the Son.
3. Check up some of the passages against what it says in your own version of the Old Testament. Are there any substantial differences?

## Discipleship

It is always a challenge to consider how we use the Scriptures. However, I would ask you to think about whether you could identify seven short passages which you feel will say everything which needs to be said about the work of Jesus Christ; his life, death, and resurrection. The exercise of doing this is an important way of checking out where we are with our beliefs, and whether we are changing in our understanding of it in any way. This could be good or bad, but the exercise enables us to keep an eye on ourselves, by the Lord's guidance!

## Final Prayer

Give us humility, Almighty Father, in the face of the great truths of the Gospel. May we handle them with dignity and care, and always remember that we are dependent upon You for everything, including our wisdom and understanding. Guide us in all truth, Almighty Father; AMEN