

The Obedience of Sonship: Adamic Obedience as the Grounds for Heavenly Ascension in the Book of Hebrews

A Thesis by

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ABSTRACT

The church and Biblical scholarship has long recognized that Christology is an important component of the argument of Hebrews. This study seeks to explore the relationship between the Sonship and ascension in the book of Hebrews. It argues that the ascension of Jesus reveals the nature of his Sonship. He is both one who shares in the divine identity of God the Father and the one who as the true human ascends up into heaven having been crowned with the eschatological glory.

Recent New Testament scholarship has called into question whether or not Jesus' Sonship in Heb. 1 can be classified as a "divine" Sonship. One argument is that the exaltation of the Son in Heb. 1 should be read in light of Heb. 2 and the use of Ps. 8. The first part of this study seeks to demonstrate that Heb. 1 characterizes Christ as both the installed Messiah but also one who has been eternal Son sharing in the glory and characteristics of God. The installation of the Son on the throne reveals who God is as the Father installs to the throne one who is an eternal Son.

Second, this study argues that Heb. 2 contains a "Second Adam Christology." The Son not only shares in true humanity but he is appointed as the one who will fulfill the destiny of humanity. In this humanity, he is crowned with glory and honor. This is the fulfillment of Ps. 8. The Son stands in solidaric representation of the people of God. This second Adam function is both kingly and priestly as representative. He enters the eschatological glory in order to lead God's people to this glory.

Third, as this eschatological man who is crowned as king and priest the Son ascends into heaven. This is set against the background of apocalyptic literature where heaven is a temple and the dwelling place of God. The Son is portrayed in Hebrews as ascending into a true tabernacle that is heaven itself. This motif brings together the spatial and temporal features of the eschatology of Hebrews. The eschatology of Hebrews cannot function however without the key figure at the center of the climax of redemption: the Son who ascends into heaven. He enters heaven as both king and priest of the age to come because he himself has first come to participate in the age to come.

Finally, we examine the role of the obedience of the Son to qualify himself for the ascension and eschatological 'perfection.' In Heb. 5:7-10, we see one who was an eternal Son offering up human obedience. We argue that the theme of obedient trust and crying out to God is an Adamic-Davidic role specifically with its background in the Psalms. Jesus is the true human figure crying out to God and entrusting himself to God. This motif of obedience to qualify himself and the people he represents is repeated in Heb. 10:5-14. We conclude, in the book of Hebrews, Christ is the eternal Son who also functions in the Adam-David role of sonship. His actions in his humanity qualify him to ascend up into heaven crowned in the glory and honor of humanity's eschatological glory.

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