

“Jesus Is Greater Than the Angels

(Part 2)

Heb. 1:4-14

- INTRO. - It would be no exaggeration, for me to say (today), that Western culture in general, (and the church in America in particular), are in an authority crisis. When you look at the government, there seems to be so much corruption. When you look at our culture there is so much violence and division. When you look at the political scene it is easy to fall into despair. Where are the leaders that will lead us out of this mess?

- This is a time in which people are struggling with authority issues – to whom should we listen?; is anyone telling the truth?; who has the right answers to our life questions?

- And one of the main problems (in our relativistic culture) is the confusion over where to look for truth and meaning in life. As one author wrote, “The ‘spiritual reference points’ keep shifting as we try...to navigate the difficulties of modern life.”

- And when it comes to the *spiritual* realm, there has always been an enormous struggle, and yet the Bible is absolutely clear about the One who is the preeminent authority.

- This NT sermon (we have here in the Book of Hebrews) begins in a powerful way by laying out the supremacy of

Christ. And in this section we are focusing on again today (1:4-14) the author rivets his listeners’ attention to the preeminent position of Christ with a chain of OT quotations.

- And (of course) this section deals with the specific subject of Jesus’ superiority over angels. One commonality between that ancient culture and ours is a fascination (and high respect) for angels.

- In *that* day there were some who were (even) worshipping angels, and in our day we have elevated angels to a (sort of) mystical, magical status in which they are seen as personal guardians and secret assistants. A lot of people today even believe that when people die they become angels. That is absolutely false!

- We are in need of a good, biblical understanding of angels – who they are and what they do. So I want to take just a few minutes (this morning) going through what you could call “angelology.”

- As there was in that day, so there still is in our day, a lot of confusion about angels – so we need a good, solid doctrine of angels from Scripture. The Bible *does* (in fact) speak a great deal about angels.

- MacArthur says, “There are 108 direct references to angels in the Old Testament and 165 in the New.” Angels are real, and they exist in our world today. They are an

invisible host of spirit beings. They do *not* have flesh and blood, but they *do* have “bodies.”

- In fact, we are told in 1 Cor. 15:40 that they have both terrestrial and celestial bodies. That means some are suitable for earth and some are suitable for heaven.

- We also know (from certain accounts in Scripture) that they are capable of taking on the form of men. For example, the angels that appeared to Abraham and Sarah (in Gen. 18) appeared as “three men” and yet they were clearly angels.

- Angels can also appear to men in other forms as well. In the resurrection account (for example) in Matt. 28:3-4, (speaking of an angel) Matthew says, “...his appearance was like lightning, and his garment as white as snow; and the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.” In this case, the angel appeared as dazzling, brilliant glory.

- There are (of course) two categories of angels. There are *fallen* angels and *holy* angels. *All* the angels were created by God in eternity past, but a third of them fell in a rebellion led by Lucifer. These *fallen* angels are now known as *demons*.

- The remaining *holy* angels are no longer subject to sin and they do *not* have the infirmities men have. They are of a higher created order than men, and they were

watching in the heavens when God created the world. They are holy, powerful, and wise.

- They do *not* marry and are unable to procreate. Neither are they subject to death (or annihilation) – therefore their number remains the same throughout eternity. Although a third of the angels fell, those who fell continue to exist as fallen angels.

- It is almost certain they were *all* created simultaneously. The Bible makes no mention of God adding to their number in any way. In other words, God made them *all* at one time and each one has a specific and unique identity.

- We don't know exactly how many angels there are, but it appears to be a countless number. For example, in Daniel's vision of God (in Daniel 7) he saw “thousands upon thousands...attending Him, and myriads upon myriads...standing before Him.” That's a Hebrew way of saying that they were without number. (That's Dan. 7:10)

- The Apostle John, (on the Isle of Patmos), saw a vision of the heavenly realm in which were many angels, “and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands...” (That's Rev. 5:11)

- Again, this is a way of saying that there were so many you could *not* count them – and this (of course) does *not* include the fallen angels – only the holy ones. There are countless more fallen angels.

- The angels are highly intelligent and (interestingly) they have emotions. In Luke 15:10 (for example) we are told that the holy angels rejoice over every sinner that is saved.

- They can move with incredible speed, and are often depicted as having wings, indicating their ability to travel over great distances very quickly. And we saw in our study of Zechariah that they are also pictured as horses (or horsemen).

- We have the names of two of the holy angels: Michael and Gabriel – and we have the name of one of the fallen angels: Lucifer. This was his name before he became known as Satan (after his fall). Michael appears to be the head of the armies of heaven, and Gabriel is referred to as “the mighty one.”

- Angels are ministers of God and do His bidding. They are involved (as both spectators and participants) in God’s works of redemption, as well as His works of judgment. They ministered to Christ in His earthly incarnation, and they watch over the church.

- They are highly organized and divided into ranks. For example, in Scripture they are given responsibilities over thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, authorities, etc. You can see *that* in Col. 1:16.

- There are special classes of angels, including cherubim, seraphim, archangels, and those simply described as “living creatures.” In Eph. 6, *demons* are described as “rulers...powers...world forces of this darkness...[and] spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.”

- Angels are much more powerful than men, (including the fallen ones). This is why our “spiritual warfare” must be according to the Scripture. Faulty *human* methods of dealing with demons will result in futility – so we need to make sure we are dealing with these powerful creatures in a biblical manner. Sadly, the modern “spiritual warfare movement” has led to much error in the church.

- In fact, we need to understand that there is nowhere in Scripture where men are told to try to bind demons, and (in fact) we are dependent upon divine power to overcome them. True biblical spiritual warfare is *not* about commanding (or binding) demons. It is about “being strong (spiritually) and standing in the strength of His might” (Eph. 6:10). It involves submitting ourselves to God and drawing near to Him. When we do that (according to James 4) God will draw near to us, and therefore we will be able to resist the devil and he will flee from us.

- Nowhere in the Bible are we told that there are “territorial demons” or that we can “bind them.” Nowhere in Scripture are Christians commanded to cast them out. Nowhere in the NT do we see an example of a church doing that. Nowhere in the Bible does it even *hint* that we

should be doing “prayer walking” and that (somehow by doing this) we can recover territory for God. Nowhere are we instructed to “break strongholds” over cities or other regions. Nowhere are we told to do “spiritual mapping.” Nowhere does the Bible talk about “generational curses.”

- Now, I could go on and on, but the bottom line is that these modern methods of “spiritual warfare” do *not* line up with what the Scripture says about how we are to respond to demons.

- Now, I wrote a “position paper” on that, (which is a fairly lengthy treatment of the entire issue of the modern spiritual warfare movement), but folks, we need to be very careful (here) that we don’t go beyond what the Bible teaches. *Not only* do we need to have a good grasp on what the Bible says about the *holy* angels – we also need to know what it teaches concerning the *fallen* angels.

- So that is a quick “angelology.” But the point of the author of Hebrews is *not* (really) to explain the role of angels, as much as it is to show the superiority of Christ *over* the angels.

- We need to understand angels from a biblical perspective, but we don’t want to miss the main point in this passage of Scripture. So we need to move (now) back into the argument that is given here.

- In this section we see four main points (with a couple of sub-points as well). We started on this outline this last week, but we did *not* get all the way through it. Last time we saw:

I. THE EXCELLENCE OF THE SON (vv. 4-6)

- In vv. 4-6 we see the comparison of Jesus to the angels in regard to His excellence. In v. 4 it says, “having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.” In those days a name was a reflection of personhood. This simply means that Christ is greater than the angels.

- He has obtained the name that is above every name (as Paul wrote in Phil. 2). As a result, He has become “much better than the angels.” The angels are indeed glorious – but they are *not* equal with the Son. The Son is much greater.

- The angels are ministers (and messengers) of God, but only Jesus is the Son. Jesus has a more *excellent* name because it is a *divine* name. This is seen in two ways. First of all in:

A. His Relationship as Son (v. 5)

- Look with me at v. 5, “For to which of the angels did He ever say, ‘Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee’?”

And again, ‘I will be a Father to Him and He shall be a Son to Me’?”

- This is a rhetorical question. When he asks, “...to which of the angels did He ever say...” the obvious answer is, “NEVER to any angel.” God has *never* equated an angel to the same position as the only begotten Son. There is only one Son and that is Jesus Christ.

- The two OT quotes (here) are from Ps. 2:7 and 2 Sam. 7:14 (quoted from the Septuagint, the Greek version of the OT). We went through this thoroughly last week, so I won’t back through that again this morning.

- Psalm 2 is a messianic psalm and 2 Sam. 7 has to do with the Davidic covenant. It is a reference to David’s greater Son, the Lord’s Messiah. But *not only* do we see the excellence of the Son in His *relationship* as Son, secondly we see it in:

B. His Return as Son (v. 6)

- Look with me at v. 6, “And when He again brings the first-born into the world, He says, ‘And let all the angels of God worship Him.’” The NASB has the proper Greek word order, and therefore this is speaking of His second coming in the future. That is when the angels will worship Him in a new way.

- The quote (here) is from Psalm 97 and that is a psalm that speaks of the future righteous reign of the Messiah. And the main point, that the author of Hebrews is making, is that if the angels worship Him, then He must be greater. And beyond that, if He is greater than they are, then the covenant He brings is greater than the covenant they brought.

- And again, the word “first-born” (in Heb. 1:6) – does *not* mean He was the first one born. It speaks of preeminence and authority.

- The word “prototokos” has nothing to do with time. It has to do with preeminence. It has to do with position. It is literally a title, meaning “the chief one.”

- Jesus Christ is the supreme “prototokos.” He has the supreme right to rule. He is the only worthy One who can open the title deed to the earth and reclaim all that is His ultimate inheritance.

- So we saw the excellence of the Son, and we saw that in His *relationship* as Son, and in His *return* as Son. But secondly, we saw:

II. THE ENTHRONEMENT OF THE SON (vv. 7-9)

- The key phrase in vv. 7-9 is the phrase, “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever” (in v. 8). This phrase is directed to the Son. This gives us the *orientation* of this section of

chapter one. And the author of Hebrews says two things about this throne. First of all we see:

A. The Angels Before the Throne (v. 7)

- Look with me at v. 7, “And of the angels He says, ‘Who makes His angels winds, and His ministers a flame of fire.’” The point that is being made (here) is that the angels are “His ministers” while Jesus is the Son.

- The quote (here) is from Ps. 104:4, and the whole point is that the angels are *not* the ones sitting on the throne – they are *before* the throne, serving the One who is sitting on the throne – the Lord Jesus Christ.

- These are angels who stand *before* the throne of God, but they are *not* God. They are His servants – His ministers. Ah, but the author of Hebrews moves on from that to the contrast. In vv. 8-9 we see:

B. The Son Upon the Throne (vv. 8-9)

- Verse 8, “But of the Son *He says*, ‘Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever...’” This is one of the greatest affirmations of the deity of Christ anywhere in Scripture!

- *Here* it says that Jesus is the Son is God, and that His throne is forever. Jesus is eternal God! This is one of the most important statements in all the Word of God!

- Those who say that Jesus was just a man, or that He was an angel who became a god (small “g”) are absolutely wrong! Those who claim that He was just a prophet or just a good teacher of moral principles are just as wrong. He is fully God and He sits on an eternal throne.

- This is God the Father, saying to God the Son, “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever.” This is an undeniable proclamation of the deity of Christ. In fact, it is (perhaps) the clearest, most powerful, and irrefutable proof of the deity of Christ given anywhere in the Bible. And both Jesus Himself and His apostles give clear testimony to this truth.

- The Son of God sits on His eternal throne, and His scepter is that of righteousness. He has loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Thy God, has anointed [Him] with the oil of gladness above His companions (above the angels, His heavenly companions).

- Now, all *that* is review, but we need to move on (now) to a third way in which the Son is superior to angels, and that is because of:

III. THE ETERNALITY OF THE SON (vv. 10-12)

- Look with me at v. 10, “And, ‘Thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Thy hands; they will perish, but Thou remainest; and they all will become old as a

garment, and as a mantle Thou wilt roll them up; as a garment they will also be changed. But Thou art the same, and Thy years will not come to an end.”

- Why the Old English here? Because the NASB translators want to emphasize that this is a quote from the OT. This is Ps. 102:25-27. This entire Psalm is a testimony to the eternal nature of the Son.

- The first few verses of this Psalm portray the rejection of Christ and His suffering. But *this* portion of the Psalm emphasize that He is the Creator who will outlive His creation.

- The heavens and the earth (here) are pictured as an old, worn out garment that is rolled up and thrown away. The Apostle Peter predicted a time when “the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.” (2 Peter 3:10)

- Some day this whole thing is going to go up in smoke, but when that happens He will remain. The created order will one day “perish,” but when it does, the eternal Christ will remain. Why? Because He does *not* change and His years never come to an end. He is eternal.

- By the way, the Book of Revelation uses this same analogy of rolling up that which is passing away (speaking of that future day). In Rev. 6:14 we read, “And the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up;

and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.” It’s the very same idea.

- The point is, that everything in this present creation is going to (some day) perish, and God is going to create a new heaven and a new earth. But in the midst of all that, He remains eternal and unchanging.

- As the author of Hebrews will say later (in 13:8), “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday and today, *yes* and forever.” He is superior to the angels because they were *created* but He is *eternal*.

- If He was around “in the beginning” to “lay the foundation of the earth,” and if “the heavens are the works of [His] hands,” then He must be eternal. That is the testimony of the Word of God. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

- You can’t get any further back (in eternity past) than “in the beginning.” This means that the Son has always existed – and this is another reason why He is superior to angels.

- If Christ *created* the universe, He must have *preceded* it. And in the same way, when it is *destroyed* He will continue to exist as the eternal Son. The word for “remain” (here) is a strong compound word in the Greek. It means “to abide through or beyond the destruction of the material universe.”

- And (by the way) one point of application before we move on – the fact that Jesus is unchangeable does *not* mean He is old fashioned – it means that He is eternally relevant. He is forever contemporary. He is always current.

- Listen, we don't have the *make* the truth of Scripture relevant – it already *is* relevant, because He is already relevant – and He is always relevant.

- The same One who spoke this universe into existence is the One who still has the power to change your life today. His unchanging power is the very same power that works to produce new creatures through spiritual regeneration today. And He has the power to save you eternally. How could that ever be irrelevant?

- So we see the superiority of the Son over angels in the *excellence* of the Son, the *enthronement* of the Son, the *eternality* of the Son – finally we see it in:

IV. THE EXALTATION OF THE SON (vv. 13-14)

- Look with me at v. 13, “But to which of the angels has He ever said, ‘Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet?’” That (of course) is from Ps. 110:1.

- Herschel Hobbs writes, “This promise made through the psalmist is to be fulfilled in Messiah's kingdom. He will rule over a redeemed natural and spiritual universe.”

- This is the 7th (and final) quotation from the OT to prove this point (of Christ's superiority over angels). *Here* (in v. 13) we see the destiny of the Son, and *then* (in v. 14) we see the destiny of angels.

- But the point being made (here) is that no angel has ever sat at such an exalted place as the right hand of God the Father. Only the Son has occupied that position. And the destiny of the Son, is that everything thing in this universe will become subject to Him.

- That (of course) will take place at His second coming. In Rev. 19:15-16 we read, “And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, ‘KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.’”

- But there is also a sense in which this is already true of Christ. In His exaltation He was given a name which is above every other name – and everyone on earth and in heaven and under the earth will bow their knee to Him. That's Phil 2:10. So He is superior because of His exaltation.

- As we have already seen, the “right hand” of God is the position of ultimate power and authority. And Jesus Himself quoted this verse as He stood before the Sanhedrin in His trial. He said (in Matt. 26:63-64), “And the high priest said to Him, ‘I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have said it *yourself*; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.’”

- In his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, Peter quoted Ps. 110:1 and declared that Jesus was seated at the right hand of God the Father. Acts 2:33-35 says, “Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.’””

- This is a primary theme in this book, and we will see this emphasized three more times. Seventeen times in the NT we see Jesus Christ pictured as being seated at the right hand of God the Father.

- But it is the Apostle Peter who explains the significance of this truth. In 1 Peter 3:22 we are told of the One “who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after

angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.”

- Christ is Lord over *fallen* angels. These are defeated enemies at His feet. He is Lord over the *holy* angels, as they are those who serve His purposes. At the right hand of God He sits in the place of absolute supremacy.

- But in contrast to that, look at v. 14, “Are they [the angels] not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?”

- The destiny of the Son is to rule and reign, the destiny of the angels is to serve. They are “ministering spirits” and they are sent out by God to serve “those who will inherit salvation.” They will forever serve the saints of God.

- The word for “service” (in that verse) is the same word from which we get our English word “deacon.” And the word for “ministering” is where we get our English word “liturgy.” It means “order of service.”

- By the way, we see examples of this service in both the Old and New Testaments. In the OT (for example) we see angels rescuing Lot from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. We see angels down in the lion’s den protecting Daniel.

- In the NT we see angels ministering to Jesus after His temptations in the wilderness. We see angels guiding Peter out of the prison cell. But this is the purpose for which God created the angels – they are to serve those who are inheriting eternal salvation.

- This does *not* mean that every believer has a “guardian angel,” but it *does* mean that the angels of God (in some way) serve the redeemed. That is a mystery we may *not* fully understand this side of glory.

- One thing we *are* taught in Scripture (even in this very book) is that we must *not* “neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.” (That’s Heb. 13:2)

- I wonder how many times I have interacted with an angel but was unaware of it? This is somewhat of a mystery, but it is something that is taught in Scripture. It is something we should keep in mind as we seek to live the Christian life.

- Now, *why* is it so important for the author of Hebrews to make the case that Jesus is superior to angels? The first few verses of the next chapter tell us why. Look at it, “For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away *from it*. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”

- What’s the message? If God expects a positive response to the Law (which came through the angels) imagine how much greater response He expects from the gospel (which came through the Son)! The author is using a “lesser to greater argument” here.

- We’ll see this in more detail next time – but for *now*, have you neglected the salvation that God has provided through Jesus Christ? Or have you received Him as your Lord and Savior?

- MAKE APPEAL

- PRAYER