

The Superiority of Christ

"Better Than the Angels

Hebrews 1:4

Introduction

The book of Hebrews is written primarily to Jewish believers. But its message is relevant to all believers even today. The writer wants to convince believers that the New Covenant is better than the old one. Jesus is the Christ! He is a better priest, better mediator, and in every way a greater revelation of God ever before. The Book of Hebrews presents comparisons between the New and Old Covenants and between Jesus Christ and everyone else to show that He is superior.

Last week we concluded that Jesus is better than the prophets. Hebrews Chapter 1 says, " God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high," ([Hebrews 1:1-3 NKJV](#))

The prophets were effective messengers of God's truth and sovereignty. The Jewish people also revered them, even if they didn't listen to their messages. The writer begins to reveal the superiority of Christ by comparing Jesus to the prophets and their message. He concludes that Christ was the fulfillment of the prophetic message.

Then beginning in verse 4, the Holy Spirit teaches us that Jesus Christ is superior to all angels. He says in verse 4," having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. 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"? But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM." And of the angels, He says: "WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS SPIRITS AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE." But to the Son He says: "YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER; A SCEPTER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE SCEPTER OF YOUR KINGDOM. YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE, GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS MORE THAN YOUR COMPANIONS." And: "YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORK OF YOUR HANDS. THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN; AND THEY WILL ALL GROW OLD LIKE A GARMENT; LIKE A CLOAK YOU WILL FOLD THEM UP, AND THEY WILL BE CHANGED. BUT YOU ARE THE SAME, AND YOUR YEARS WILL NOT FAIL." But to which of the angels has He ever said: "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, TILL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES YOUR FOOTSTOOL"? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" ([Hebrews 1:4-14 NKJV](#))

These verses supply us with some interesting information about the nature of angels.

I. Jesus Created the Angels

Human beings, for the most part, are a wonderful creation! We were created higher than plants, animals, and any other material creation in this world. But there are created beings even higher than humans! Hebrews 2:9 indicates that angels are higher than humans. When Jesus became a man, He "was made a little lower than the angels."

God's angels are holy, powerful, and wise. They are extraordinary beings created by God before He created humans. They were in the heavens observing when God created the world. They were made higher than humans, or at least higher than fallen humans.

The Jews believed that angels were significantly important to the old covenant. They considered angels the highest beings next to God. They saw angels as the messengers between humans and God and that angels always surrounded God. The Jews also believed that angels were messengers who did God's will and work in the Earth. They thought God made angels from a fiery substance like a blazing light. It's an analysis they may very well be right about. They believed angels were created and did not eat, drink, or marry.

The Jews even gave names to some angels. They believed one group were "presence angels" who were the presence of God at all times. They gave some names such as Raphael, Yurriel, Phanuel, Gabriel, and Michael. EI is the general name for God. So to each angelic name, they added the name of God – EI. They conjectured that there were two hundred angels who controlled the movements of the stars and kept things on course. They suggested a calendar angel controlled the never-ending succession of days, months, and years. They believed that there was one mighty angel who took care of the seas, one who took care of frost, another for dew, rain, snow, hail, thunder, lightning, and so on. They proposed that recording angels wrote down every word that each human spoke. They acknowledged there was an angel of death. And they surmised that there was a guardian angel for every nation and every child. One rabbi theorized that there were so many angels that every blade of grass had its angel.

From Scripture (which is much better to rely upon than speculation), we know that angels are spirit beings and yet have some type of form. It seems they can even appear in human form. Hebrews 13:2 says, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

They can also appear in other forms. Matthew 28:3-4 describes an angel who appeared at Christ's resurrection and sat on the stone that had been rolled away. "His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead *men*." (Matthew 28:3-4 NKJV)

Angels can appear in dazzling, brilliant glory. So when we say that angels are spirits, we do not mean they have no form. They have a form, but it is different from the human form. And while among humans there are believers and unbelievers, among angels there are the holy angels, and there are fallen angels.

Lucifer, or Satan as we call him, led a rebellion against God at some point in the eternal past. He was defeated and lost his standing in Heaven. Jesus says in Luke 10:18, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." (Luke 10:18 NKJV)

After the fall of these rebellious angels, God destroyed Lucifer's domain on the Earth and recreated it for us to inhabit. That is why Satan is so persistent in trying to corrupt humanity. He desperately wants to regain dominion over what was once his domain.

So, how did all these angels get here? According to Colossians 1:16, Jesus created them, which is why Jesus Christ is superior to the angels. Colossians 1:16 says, "For 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. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him, all things consist." (Colossians 1:16-17 NKJV)

And in Ephesians 3:9, the Apostle Paul tells us that his mission was "to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;" (Ephesians 3:9 NKJV)

There are 108 references to angels in the Old Testament and 165 in the New Testament. There was no doubt that angels existed and that the Old Testament saints were well aware of it.

Jesus Christ is greater than the angels because He is the one who created them, which by default makes Him superior to them. But not only were the angels created by Him, but the angels also worship Him.

II. Angels Worship Jesus

Angels are not just heavenly robots. They are intelligent beings devoted to serving God. That is their God-created purpose. The Bible says that all the holy angels rejoice when one sinner repents in Luke 15:10.

Angels can speak. In Galatians 1:8, the Apostle Paul says, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you ..." They can move with swiftness and have incredible speed, according to Daniel 9:21. They can, with great speed, move throughout the heavenlies.

Paul speaks of three heavens.

1. The first Heaven consists of our Earth's atmosphere.

2. The second Heaven consists of our universe.
3. The third Heaven is where God lives, according to Deut. 10:14; 2 Cor. 12:2.

Are there beings in other parts of the universe? Yes, there are! Angelic beings inhabit the universe. They are eternal beings, not subject to death. They are countless ages older than humans, and evidently, trillions exist. Even when a numberless host of them fell with Satan, myriads of holy angels remained faithful in their loyalty and service to God. Daniel said, "A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. (Daniel 7:10)

The Apostle John saw them in Revelation 5:11 and says, "The number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." That's a lot of angels! Exactly enough to get all the work of God done! They are more powerful than we are, and even to deal with fallen angels, we must call on God's divine power to deal with them.

Angels are highly organized. The scriptures refer to their various ranks as thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, and authorities (Eph. 6:12; Col. 1:16). Some of the special classes of angels are cherubim, seraphim, archangels, and Zoe, also described as living creatures. The angels have been witness to all of God's redemptive acts.

They worship and minister to God continuously. Christ created angels to worship God. Since Jesus is God, he is obviously greater than any angel. They ministered to Christ in His humiliation. After Satan tempted Jesus, the Bible says angels came and ministered to Him (Matt. 4:11).

The writer quotes Psalm 97:7 when he says in verse 6, "But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM." ([Hebrews 1:6 NKJV](#))

Even though Jesus Christ humbled Himself and was made lower than the angels for a time, the angels still worshipped Him. The Jews shouldn't have been surprised at that because it came from their own Scripture.

The angels have always worshipped Christ." They worshiped Him in eternity before time, and they worshiped him throughout all of time, before, and following His incarnation. But at His incarnation, the angels were called upon to worship Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus is higher than the angels because He is the very God that angels have always worshiped.

It would be an absolute sin to violate God's laws to worship anyone but God. If God says that all the angels must worship the Son, then the Son must be God. Jesus Christ is the God of eternity and the Son of humanity. As the incarnate Son of God, Christ is to be worshiped, just as He is the Eternal God.

He created angels; He commands them, and they worship Him.

III. Jesus Rules Over the Angels

The Jews had the highest regard for angels because they believed that God used angels to carry on the work of the Old Covenant. In his indictment of Israel in Acts 7:51, Stephen says, "*You* stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers *did*, so *do* you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept *it*." (Acts 7:51-53 NKJV)

Galatians 3:19 says, "What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator." (Galatians 3:19 NKJV)

To the Jews, angels were supremely exalted beings, so the writer of Hebrews must show that Christ is better than angels. His purpose in Hebrews 1:4-14 is to show that Christ, as the guardian of the New Covenant, is a better mediator than the angelic mediators of the Old Covenant. Therefore, Christ must be better than angels. The writer of Hebrews uses the Old Testament to prove to Israel that Christ is a better mediator.

Some deny the deity of Christ based on Hebrews 1:4. They claim that Jesus was not God but a created being since verse 4 says, "Being made so much better than the angels," they say, "See, Christ was made." But the Greek word used for "made" means "to become" not "to create."

Jesus Christ has always existed, but He became better than the angels in His exaltation since He was lower than the angels in His human form. (Heb. 2:9). Hebrews 1:4 refers to Christ as God's Son. Jesus, in His humanity, became lower than angels.

After His faithful obedience and work on the Cross as the Son of God, Christ ascended back to Heaven exalted above the angels. Only this time, He was exalted as the Son. Christ did not become the Son of God until His incarnation. He was not the Son of God in eternity past; He was God as the second person of the Trinity. For a while, He was lower than the angels, as He faithfully accomplished God's work of salvation; and then He became better than the angels as the exalted Son of God.

Verse 6 says that Christ is the "first-begotten." Some use this word as proof that Jesus is a created being. But the word "first-begotten" distinguishes position, not time. Colossians 1:15 says Christ "is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation."

According to the Discover Bible, the Greek word for "first-begotten" and "firstborn" is prototokos, which means "the chief one." Christ as begotten means "the Chief One, the sovereign ruler of everything." The firstborn or eldest son was usually the

heir to everything and the chief of the father's estate. The firstborn or first-begotten refers to a person's right and authority, not to their time of birth.

Genesis 49:3 describes the character of the firstborn. Jacob says, "Reuben, you are my firstborn, My might and the beginning of my strength, The excellency of dignity and the excellency of power." ([Genesis 49:3 NKJV](#))

Might, strength, dignity, and power refer to a position of authority, not a point in time. As the firstborn, Jesus Christ rules over all that belongs to the Godhead. Jesus is the ruler of all things! He is the most honored, the most dignified, and the most powerful One of all.

One last thought from verse 6. "But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM." ([Hebrews 1:6 NKJV](#))

When is this "again" going to take place? When is the firstborn coming again into the world? Could he be talking about the second coming of Christ? We know that God already brought Christ into the world once as the begotten Son, but He's going to bring Christ into the world once again in blazing glory as the firstborn heir of all things. At the Second Coming, the fullness of verse 6 will come to pass.

Even the angels didn't understand all of God's revelation. The Apostle Peter says that even angels desire to look into these things. It seems angelic hosts are not yet able to discern everything. They are not omniscient. It is not until God brings back the first-begotten into the world that the angels will be able to give a fullness of worship.

Revelation 5:11 John says, "Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!" ([Revelation 5:11-12 NKJV](#))

That is what angelic worship will be like when Christ comes again to take the Earth as His possession. At the Second Coming, Christ is revealed as the Supreme Ruler over all the Earth. Even the angels will gain understanding when they see Jesus return as King of kings and Lord of lords. Christ is greater than the angels because He created them, and they must worship Him because He is their commander and ruler.

Conclusion

Angels in their proper place and role are magnificent creatures! They are servants of Christ, and they are ministering spirits to the people of Christ. Angels were created by Christ not to compete with Him but to worship and honor him, and He is

infinitely superior to them. They can help us hold fast to Christ and trust him and love him and treasure him and finally reach him in the fullness of our salvation.

The universe is filled with God's angelic helpers. Be encouraged and hopeful because as the Supreme Ruler of everything, Jesus Christ can dispatch at any moment His angelic messengers with heavenly blessings and answers to your prayers and divine provision for your journey in faith.

Even now, the heavenly worshipers are being sent to minister to us and bring us safely into the presence and peace of Christ.