

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 9 May 2021. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

He Is Superior to the Angels (Part 1)

Hebrews 1:4-7

We are living in a day of great spiritual confusion. Apostasy is manifesting itself everywhere; and one of the many ways in which it is showing itself is in the increasing focus upon angels instead of upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, please do not misunderstand: angels have an extremely important role in God's dealings with man. Before the Bible was complete, God *often* delivered messages through His holy angels. However, the Apostle Paul prophesied in **1 Corinthians 13** of a day when the Word of God would be "*perfect*" ("complete"), and when prophecies and new revelations would no longer be given. This means that those in our day who claim to have received new revelations from angels are either knowingly lying, or else have been deceived by demonic spirits *masquerading* as God's angels.

Seeking to make contact with angels is an extremely dangerous thing. Even before the completion of the canon of Scripture, when God was still giving messages through His angels, God's prophets did not *pray* to angels, or *actively seek to communicate* with them, or *revere or worship* them. Whenever God did send an angel to deliver a message, it was His prerogative to do so; but the angels did not come at the beck or call of God's people. Today, however, we routinely hear of professing Christians who "pray to their guardian angel," or who seek guidance from them in some way. Folks, this is dangerous! Praying to angels, actively seeking guidance from them, or worshipping them in any way, is forbidden by God; and it is an open invitation to *the devil's* angels to come into your life, and influence you.

It is crucial that we, as Christians, be grounded in the words of sound doctrine, so that we will not be led astray by what Paul called the "*voluntary humility and worshipping of angels*" (**Colossians 2:18**). This morning we will be receiving some more sound doctrine about the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ; and as we do so, we will see how He is superior to all the angels.

Now, as you'll remember, this book was written to Hebrew Christians. However, some of these professing Christians had never truly placed their trust in Christ to save them. They may have been convinced, on an *intellectual* level, of Jesus' deity, and of His Messiahship, and of the reality of His resurrection; but in their hearts, they had never truly trusted in Christ alone to save them. They were still trusting in their keeping of the Law, instead of simply clinging to the finished work of Jesus on the cross. Now that they were facing great persecution for their identification with Jesus of Nazareth, they had no true faith to support them; and thus, many of them were abandoning their profession of faith in Jesus, and were going back to the synagogue.

That is one of the main reasons why Paul wrote this letter. Paul was warning those who were still "sitting on the fence" that if they decided to turn away from Jesus, then they would have nothing to look forward to, except fiery indignation. In order to make his point, Paul went to great lengths to show them how Jesus is "*better*" (or "superior") to everything that they had ever loved and revered in Judaism. Jesus is better than the prophets; He is better than the angels; and He is better than Moses, Aaron, and the

Levitical priesthood. Also, the New Covenant, which Christ has purchased with His blood, is infinitely better than the Old Covenant, because it actually takes away our sins.

Last week, we saw, in **Hebrews 1:1-3**, that Jesus is superior to the prophets. This morning, we shall see that *He Is Superior to the Angels*.

Read Hebrews 1:4-7.

In this message, I will highlight four ways in which Christ is superior to the angels.

I. The angels are, by nature, inferior to Christ (v. 4).

There is a word that is used 13 times in the book of **Hebrews**. It is the word *kreitton*, which means **"better"** (or, "superior to"). Here in **verse 4**, we find the first use of this word. Paul is reminding his Jewish audience that Jesus Christ is, by His very nature, *better* than the angels. He is, in His very being and essence, infinitely superior to the angels, because He is God!

Why was it necessary for Paul to drive home this point? Because angels had played a powerful role in the history of the Jewish nation! Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all had amazing encounters with angels. Angels played a role in the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, as well. In Stephen's sermon just before his death, he mentioned that the Law was given **"by the disposition of angels."** In **Galatians 3**, Paul said that the Law was **"ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator."** We know that God Himself appeared on Mount Sinai in human form, and that He personally wrote the Law on the stone tablets; but somehow, the angels were involved in it, too. Perhaps the angels handed the stone tablets to the Lord, just before He wrote the Ten Commandments on them with His finger. Perhaps the angels handed the tablets to *Moses* just *after* God had written the words of the Law upon them. Perhaps they did *both* these things--and much else, besides. However, one thing is certain: angels were heavily involved in the giving of the Law. Can you see why the Jews might have tended to be fearful and superstitious about angels, almost to the point of adoration? Paul, being a Jew himself, knew that His people had a dangerous tendency to revere angels; and thus, he is reminding his readers that Jesus is far superior to them. He is **"better"** than the angels.

Now, this is the point where cults such as the Jehovah's Witnesses would pipe up and say, "Ah, but wait. **Hebrews 1:4** says that Jesus was **'made so much better than the angels.'** This means that Jesus is a created being himself. He is the highest of the angels--but He is an angel, nonetheless. He is not God."

Folks, if anyone should try to use this logic on you, please be ready to defend Jesus' deity! There is a reason why Paul said that Jesus was **"made."** Let's compare this statement to another statement that Paul made a little bit farther into this letter.

Read Hebrews 2:9.

In this verse, Paul says that Jesus was **"made"** a little **"lower"** than the angels. So, which is it? Was Jesus made **"better"** than the angels, or **"lower"** than the angels? The answer is: both! As God, He is infinitely **"better"** than the angels, in His very essence. Yet, when He came into our world and took on human flesh, He became **"lower"** than the angels *in position!*

When Paul says that Jesus was **"made so much better than the angels,"** he isn't talking about some time in the ancient past when the Son was "created" by the Father. Rather, he is talking about the point, *in human history*, when the Son entered into this world, and took on human

flesh. In His humanity, Jesus was "*lower*" than the angels, in that He was a mortal Man. As a Man, He was temporarily humbled and lowered in position. Yet, as God, He was still infinitely "*better*" than all the angels. He may not have *appeared* to be superior to the angels when He was down here on earth; but His superiority to the angels is now manifest for all to see. When Jesus arose from the dead, and ascended to His Father's throne, He was again exalted high above His creation, and was openly declared to be the Son of God, with power.

Read Philippians 2:9-11.

In this passage, Paul says that "*At the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*" This statement is taken from **Isaiah 45:23**, where Jehovah said, "*I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.*" Think about that! If *Jehovah* says that every knee will bow to *Him*, and that every tongue will confess to *Him*, and if Paul says that every knee will bow to *Jesus*, and that every tongue will confess to *Jesus*, then who is Jesus? He is the same one who spoke those words in **Isaiah 45:23**. He is Jehovah! He is God! By applying the words of **Isaiah 45:23** to Jesus, Paul is identifying Jesus as God. By inheritance, Christ has obtained a more excellent name than that of the angels. He is intrinsically better than they.

Now, in order to show that Jesus is "*so much better*" than the angels, Paul is about to quote seven Scriptures from the Old Testament. All these Scriptures demonstrate that the angels are inferior to the Son of God. As we launch into the second, third, and fourth reasons why Jesus is superior to the angels, we will be looking closely at these Old Testament Scriptures.

II. No angel is called the "*the begotten Son of God*" (v. 5).

(Read verse 5 again.) In this verse, Paul points out that Jesus is superior to the angels because **no angel has ever been called the "*the begotten Son of God.*"**

Now, in the Old Testament, the term "*sons of God*" always refers to the angels. In some places, it refers to the fallen angels. In other places, it refers to God's holy angels. Sometimes it refers to the fallen *and* the holy angels together. However, there is one thing that you never see. You never see an individual angel referred to as "*the Son of God.*" **They are always referred to as a group.** They are always called "*sons of God.*"

Now, in the New Testament, Christians are called "*the sons of God,*" by right of the New Birth. However, there is no instance in which an individual Christian is called "*the son of God.*" Like the angels in the Old Testament, Christians are always referred to as a group. **Only Jesus bears the title "*the Son of God*"!** He bears this title because His relationship to the Father is unique. It is unlike any other. In fact, the Greek word "*begotten*" is the word *genes*, which literally means "kind." The name "only begotten Son of God" literally means "one kind" or "one-of-a-kind Son of God."

Are you getting the idea? Paul is telling us that Jesus Christ is *not* an angel; nor is He in the same class as the angels, in any sense of the word. He stands completely apart from them. Let's look again at the first part of this verse. **(Read Hebrews 1:5a.)** Paul here is quoting here from the book of **Psalms**. As we shall see, this passage is a prophecy of Christ. Christ Himself spoke these words through King David.

Read Psalm 2:7-8.

The Speaker in this passage is Jesus Christ Himself. He is speaking to us through the pen of the prophet David. And what is He saying? He is telling us that the LORD (His Father) has said to Him, "*Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*"

Now, what does this statement "*This day have I begotten thee*" mean? Christ has *always* been called the Son of God, from eternity past. He is co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father. Why, then, does the Father say, "*This day have I begotten you*"? Are the cultists right? Was Jesus "created" or "brought into being" at some point before the world began, and was called "the Son of God" at that time? No! We must let Scripture interpret Scripture. Let's see what Paul says in **Romans 1**.

Read Romans 1:1-4.

Did you notice that phrase "*declared to be the Son of God*"? That sounds like what we read in **Psalm 2**, doesn't it? Remember what the Son said in **Psalm 2:7**? He said, "*I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.*" What "day" is He talking about? Paul answered that question for us here in **Romans 1:4**! Paul says that Jesus was "*declared to be the son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.*" According to Paul, Christ's *resurrection* is the "day" in history at which Christ was openly "*declared*" to be the begotten Son of God, and the Inheritor of His Father's Kingdom. He didn't *become* the Son of God on the day of His resurrection, because He had been the Son of God from eternity past. However, He was "*declared to be the Son of God with power.*" The Father had already testified of His Son when He audibly spoke from heaven and said, "*This is my beloved Son; hear ye him*"; however, Christ's resurrection *proved* that Jesus is the only begotten Son. He was declared to be the Son of God *with power*. What could be a more powerful proof of Christ's Sonship than His resurrection from the grave, and His ascension to Heaven? At this very moment, the Son is sitting on His throne, and is awaiting the hour when He will descend to this earth to claim His full inheritance; to overthrow the kingdoms of this earth; and to establish His kingdom!

Now, let's look at the second half of **verse 5**. (**Read Hebrews 1:5b**.) Once again, Paul is showing us, from Old Testament Scripture, the unique, one-of-a-kind relationship that the Father and the Son have. He uses a very interesting verse to prove it, too. Please turn with me to **2 Samuel 7:12**.

Read 2 Samuel 7:12-17.

In this passage, God is promising to King David, through His prophet Nathan, that He will establish David's Kingdom over Israel forever. He is also promising that one day the Messiah will arise from David's royal lineage, and will sit on the throne of Israel "*forever.*" **Verse 14**, in particular, is referring to the Messiah. (**Read verse 14 again**.)

Now, if you look at this on the surface, you might be tempted to think, "How could Jesus be the 'son' that Nathan is prophesying about? Jesus has never committed 'iniquity.' Isn't he talking about David's son, Solomon--the one who built the Temple after David's death?"

The answer is: yes, it is true that Solomon is the son of David who built the temple after his death. It is also true that God chastised Solomon for his disobedience (as He did to many other of David's royal descendants). However, **this promise is ultimately pointing to the Son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ**. How do I know this? Because the LORD says that this Son's throne will be established "*forever.*" This cannot be said of any other of David's

descendants. The throne of David *came to a halt* in 597 B.C. when Jechoniah, the 16th generation great-grandson of David, was overthrown by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar. Jechoniah was the last legitimate heir to the throne of David. No legal descendant of David has sat on the throne of Israel since then. **However, when Jesus returns to earth to reclaim the throne of David, He will reign on David's throne forever and ever!**

Paul isn't trying to sell us some weird, unique interpretation of this verse. This isn't something that Paul dreamed up. The Hebrew audience to whom Paul was writing *knew very well* that **2 Samuel 7:14** is a prophecy of the *ultimate* Son of David—the Messiah. In an ancient Jewish commentary that was written around 200 B.C., the author stated that the “*son*” who is mentioned in **2 Samuel 7:14** is “the shoot of David, who is to arise...in Zion in the last days.”

The Jews knew that "the Son of David" is the Messiah. Thus, Paul's message to his Jewish brethren is clear: Jesus is *the* Son of God: and there *is no other* Son of God. Jesus is not an angel, because no angel can claim this title. Christ is superior to all the angels.

III. **The angels worship Christ (v. 6.)**

(Read verse 6 again.) Not only is Jesus “*better than*” the angels by nature; and not only is He the only One who is called “The Son of God”; but He is also *worshipped* by *all* the angels. According to this verse, Jesus is superior to the angels **because the angels worship Christ.**

Now, let's break this verse down. First, you'll notice that Christ is called the “*firstbegotten*” of the Father. This does *not* mean that He is a created being. Let's compare this verse to a Scripture that we examined last week, and see what we can find about this title.

Read Colossians 1:17-18.

In this passage, Jesus is called by several titles. For one thing, He is called “*the beginning.*” This does not mean that He *had* a beginning. The Greek word that is used here is *arche*. This is the basis of our English word “architect.” It has the idea of “the Builder,” “the Designer,” “the One who begins something.” To make it even simpler, it means, “The Beginner.”

Now, look at the next name that Jesus is called. He is called “*the firstborn.*” The Greek word for “*firstborn*” is the same word that is translated in **Hebrews 1:6** as “*firstbegotten.*” And of *whom* is Christ the firstborn? He is called the “*firstborn from the dead!*” This means that Jesus is the *Preeminent One* in the resurrection. When the word “*firstborn*” or “*firstbegotten*” is used in Scripture, it rarely means "first in order of birth": rather, it has to do with “pre-eminence.” When this title is applied to Christ, it means that He is the "Preeminent One." In this case, Paul is saying that Jesus is the "Preeminent One" in the resurrection harvest. Christ was the first one to be resurrected to immortality; and someday, we who are saved will be resurrected with bodies made like to His glorious body.

Now, let's move on with **Hebrews 1:6.** (Turn to **Hebrews 1:6.**) Paul says, “*When he* (meaning God) *bringeth in the firstbegotten* (Christ) *into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him.*” I don't think I need to point out when this event occurred! It happened on the night of Jesus' birth, when an innumerable army of angels appeared to shepherds and said, “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*”

Can you imagine being present for *that* worship service? This was a worship service like none other! Yet, *whom*, exactly, were the angels worshipping when they said “*Glory to God in the*

highest”? They were worshipping God, of course; yet, here in **Hebrews 1:6**, Paul points out that they were worshipping the “*firstbegotten*”—the Son of God! Folks, this means that Jesus is God! I don't know how many angels were assembled around that Judaeon hill side on the night of Christ's birth; but according to Paul, *all* God's angels, regardless of where they were stationed in Heaven or in earth, were worshipping *Jesus!*

Now, let's go a little deeper. This quote—“*And let all the angels of God worship him*”—is taken from **Psalm 97:7**. Let's see what we can learn from this psalm.

Read Psalm 97:7.

In **verse 7**, the psalmist is pointing out the foolishness of those who worship graven images. Yet, in the second part of the verse, when he says, “*Worship him, all ye gods,*” he isn't talking about the *physical* idols of wood and stone. (Obviously, pieces of wood aren't going to rise up and worship God!) He is talking about the *angelic beings behind* the idols. The Bible teaches that the *real* beings that people worship when they worship idols are demons. Remember when God told Moses that upon all the “gods” of Egypt He would execute judgment? How could God execute judgment against lifeless objects of wood and stone? Obviously, God was talking about the *demons* behind the idols of Egypt. By destroying Egypt in the ten plagues, God was showing that the “gods” of Egypt (in other words, the demons whom they were actually worshipping) were powerless against Jehovah.

Again, this isn't some strange idea that Paul dreamed up. The Jews to whom Paul was writing would have recognised this quotation from **Psalm 97**, and would have known that the “gods” being spoken of were fallen angels. Now, with this in mind, please notice this: **the angels in Psalm 97:7 are being commanded to worship “the LORD”!** (Read verse 7 again.)

Brethren, even the fallen angels are required to worship Jesus! That is why Jesus rebuked Satan, and said, “*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*” Of course, Satan's angels *refuse* to worship Christ (for now); but one day, they *will* worship Him, against their will! One day, every knee will bow to Jesus, both of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. That includes not only men, but all the angels (both the holy ones and the fallen ones).

Jesus is not an angel, folks; nor is He in the same class as angels. If He *were* an angel, then Paul would have had to say, “And let all the *other* angels of God worship Him.” But He didn't. He said, “*And let all the angels of God worship him.*” Christ is the eternal Son of God, the second Person of the Godhead; and He is worthy of worship from all His creation.

IV. The angels serve Christ (v. 7).

(**Read verse 7 again.**) I wish we could look at all seven of the reasons for Christ's superiority over the angels; but time will not permit us to do so. This fourth reason will have to be the last one for today. However, this a good place to stop, because in this verse we see the relationship that *creation* should have with its *Creator*. Let's go to the **Psalms**, and look at the verse that Paul is quoting.

Read Psalm 104:4.

God created angels to serve Him. He created them with varying degrees of strength, power, and authority, and with many diverse duties; and they are far more powerful than we. The psalmist describes them as “*ministers of flaming fire.*” In **Ezekiel 1**, we are told that angels appear like “*lightning*” when they move about. Yet, powerful though they are, they all humbly serve Christ. The angels were created to serve; and *Christ* is the One whom they serve. He is superior to them. Their purpose is to worship and serve *Him!*

Now, maybe you’re thinking, “Well, this is great doctrine, Pastor. It’s great to learn all this about the angels. But how does this apply to me?” Well, here’s a lesson that you can “take home with you” today. The lesson is: we should not pray to, seek guidance from, or revere angels! Though the angels are much more powerful than we, they are our fellowservants. We should pray to, seek guidance from, and worship only Christ!

Sad to say, the Jewish nation has, for the most part, become more and more occultic and mystic in their worship over the past 2,000 years. It is not uncommon for well-meaning Jews to pray to angels, and even to departed rabbinical leaders, such as Rabbi Schneerson of New York! When you turn away from Christ, you *will* worship something or someone else; and Satan and his crew would be more than happy to receive your worship, in some other guise! Let’s see what happened when the Apostle John inadvertently began to worship an angel.

Read Revelation 22:8-9.

Did you ever stop to think that God created us for the exact same reason that He created the angels? He created us to serve Him! I’m afraid that sometimes we get a little confused on this point. Sometimes we almost have the idea that the angels are there to serve *us*. It is true, of course, that the angels are *very* involved in human affairs, and that they are constantly protecting God’s people, and carrying out assignments from God on behalf of His people. However, God didn’t create the angels to serve *us*; He created both the angels *and* us to serve *Him!* God created both angels *and* men for the purpose of *worshipping Him*.

The holy angels have been serving and worshipping God day and night for the past 6,000 years. Christian, can you say that *your* consuming desire is to serve and worship your Creator, Jesus Christ, with instant obedience? Or would you have to admit, in all honesty, that you are often more consumed with *your* needs and *your* desires? If so, I am here to remind you of why Christ saved you. In **Revelation 7**, God says that in Heaven we will be before His throne, and that we will serve Him day and night. Christ saved you so that you may serve Him with your life--both in this world, and in the next! The angels of God are “ministers”; and we are “ministers,” too. We have been saved not so that we might be ministered *unto*, but that we might *minister*. We are saved to serve the Lord. We are not to *worship* angels; but we certainly should follow their example of relentless, tireless, instant, and loving obedience!

Conclusion: Brethren, we will be serving Christ, and worshipping Him, for the rest of eternity! One day, we will stand together with an innumerable company of angels, and will sing, “***Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing!***” Throughout eternity, we will be saying these words, and many others like them, in praise to our God; so why not exalt His name *now*? Why not serve Him with all your heart and soul *now*—so that you will not be ashamed when He appears in the clouds to take you home? Serve God with all your heart, Christian! Now, **perhaps you have never been saved.** If so, please don’t neglect salvation! Don’t wait

for a more "convenient time." You don't know how much time you have left. Repent of your sin today, and believe on Christ alone to save you. He has already done everything necessary to purchase your salvation: you have only to receive that gift by faith. The Bible says, ***“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.”***