

The Supremacy of Christ – Christ is Superior to the Angels

Hebrews 1:4 – 14

Hebrews is a book of encouragement and exhortation. It is a book of encouragement to the Jewish Christians and to you and me that the **new covenant is better than the old covenant**. Jesus Christ is better than anything the Law of Moses, or the world and everything in it has to offer. It is also a book of exhortation or warning. We have such a great salvation, do not neglect the Word of God. We have God's Word and it is life giving. Don't get so busy with the activity of life that causes you to drift away to other things. Drifting leads to doubting and becoming dull to God's Word. Eventually, we no longer see God's Word for the life it gives, but despise it for the conviction and condemnation for those who reject God's Word. We say, "My life is fine without Jesus. Jesus can't be the only way to salvation and anyone who says that is a bigot or liar."

Author: The text does not identify the author so scholars only speculate by studying writing style and the content that is emphasized.

When was it written?

- We know it was before 96 A.D. because Clement of Rome quotes from Hebrews in a letter written at that time.
- In Hebrews the priests are still offering sacrifices, so we believe it was before 70 AD when the temple was destroyed.

Written to Jewish Christians. Bryan shared that these second generation Christians were being persecuted (Heb. 10:32-34). Likely this was during the rule of Nero, who reigned over Rome in the mid 60's and had a policy of state sponsored persecution of Christians. There was pressure to escape persecution by returning to the Mosaic system. To just blend into the culture. It would have been much easier for them to be Jewish than part of the Christian sect. The encouragement and warnings are still applicable to us. To those who believe and follow Jesus today.

- The audience is very important because the writer is specifically appealing to the Hebrew bible as authority to demonstrate Jesus's supremacy.
- Not only is Jesus better than the angels, Moses and the prophets, again Jesus is better because He delivers a **new covenant that is better** and is **built upon the writings and promises** of the Hebrew Bible or as we refer to as the Old Testament or Old Covenant.

Let's begin by reading the first 3 verses that Bryan covered last week. These 3 short verses are an amazing declaration and set the table for the encouragements and warnings to follow.

Hebrews 1:1-3 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

- God spoke through the prophets in many ways and many times over a long period of time. He used many men, the Patriarchs, Moses and the Prophets to communicate and through visions, dreams, stories, and songs.
- **BUT**, in these "last days." Last days refers to the time of redemptive history initiated with Jesus' entering the world as our Savior whereby God has spoken directly to us by his Son.
- In these first two verses, God reveals Himself over a long time through many voices and many ways, **BUT in these "last days,"** God now reveals Himself through a single voice, His Son.
- He then goes on to describe the Son in His divinity.
 - He is the heir of all things, He is the creator of all things, He is the radiance of God's glory, the shekinah glory, the light that was shining before the creation of the sun and moon. He is the EXACT

imprint or reflection of God's nature. He is the ruler over the created universe and holds the world together by His power.

- He is God's fully divine son, God in the flesh.
 - Jesus said, **John 14:9** "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. "
 - He is also God's Messianic Son.
- Hebrews 1:3b** "After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."
- He came as foretold by the prophets to intervene in history as God's Messiah to purify all those who believe in Him through His "perfect" sacrifice and resurrection for their sins.
 - According to the Old "imperfect" Covenant, the Priests continually STAND. They stand to complete their never-ending sacrifices to cover the sins. But Christ, he SAT down at the right hand of God. He sat down after making purification for sins showing His work was completed once and for all. A "perfect" sacrifice ushering a once-for-all redemption that was eternal. He gives us a New Covenant that provides a perfect standing before God.
 - God who spoke to the Hebrew people through the patriarchs, Moses and the prophets is the same God who has now spoken in the Son.
 - **Not only is Jesus better than the prophets, He is better than everything and everybody. He is our prophet, He is our priest and He is our King.**

Remember the encounter of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus when Jesus drew near and began walking with them. Their eyes were kept from recognizing Jesus. And Jesus asks about what they are talking about. They say, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened here in these days?" And they tell Jesus their account of His condemnation, crucifixion, resurrection and the disciples encounter with the angels at the tomb.

Luke 24:25-27 ²⁵ And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

- The grand narrative of the bible from Genesis to Revelation is the story of Jesus. We see him throughout the entire bible.
 - He is the promise to crush the serpents head in Genesis 3
 - He is the promise to bless all nations through Abraham in Genesis 12
 - He is represented by the Passover Lamb as the true Lamb of God
 - In Moses, we see Jesus as the perfect law-giver
 - He is the promised Messiah and conquering king, greater than David
 - The prophet Isaiah foretells of Jesus as the suffering servant
 - He is the hope and restoration spoken by the prophets
 - He is the eternal Word that became flesh and dwelt among us.
 - He is our Passover Lamb whose blood covers our sins
 - He is the one who conquered death in His resurrection securing eternal life for believers.
 - He is seated at the right hand of the Father
 - He is the King of kings and Lord of lords who will return to judge and destroy evil, sin and death.
 - He will one day restore creation and Jesus will forever reign.
 - As a church we just celebrated Feast of Tabernacle or Sukkot. God meticulously laid out the stars and the sun and moons and ordained the cycle of new moons that mark the months and seasons. God instructed Moses to assemble the people on appointed days marked by the calendar that He created to celebrate His provision and establish a plan of redemption.

How easy would it be for these early Christians to just return to the familiar and safe practices of the Old Covenant? It was the culture. They had grown up

with the stories of Abraham, Moses, and the Law. The temple and the Rabbi's were central to their daily life. Jesus was a real man. Some may have seen or heard Him speak. He claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God. He was killed for this claim. It was believed by many that he rose from the grave and was the promised Messiah, but could he really be? Maybe I will just go with the flow and return to the Mosaic Law.

We pick up in verse 4 where the author begins to appeal to the many core beliefs from the Old Covenant that the Jewish Christians would be tempted to return. But the writer declares that **Jesus is better**.

Let us begin with

Hebrews 1:4 ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

- Richard Pratt talked about things in the bible are not always clear. In my background, the things that I don't understand or are not super clear in the bible, I just ignored until I joined VCC. The spiritual realm and angels have been one of those things that I have ignored, so I did spend a fair amount of time reading about angels.
- The first part of verse 4 makes the declaration that Jesus is "much superior to angels." We could stop here with this one statement.
- The rest of the chapter the author hammers this point using 6 OT verses to make 6 points why Jesus is superior to the angels.
- Why do you think that it is so important to say to the Hebrew Christians that Jesus is better than the angels? They believed:
 - God and the angels delivered the Law to Moses.
 - They thought angels were second only to God.
 - They were close to if not already worshipping angels.
- First, let's take a look at what Scripture tells us about angels.
- There are 108 references in the OT to angels and 165 references in the NT. There is no doubt angels exist.

- Colossians 1:16 – 17 All things were created by Christ including the angels. The number of angels does not change. Nowhere in Scripture are angels subject to death.
- 1 Corinthians 15:44- There are bodies of the earth and bodies of the heavens. Angels have heavenly bodies.
- Matthew 22 says they are not given to marriage and do not procreate and have little angels.
- Hebrews 13:2 says they can appear in human form. “be careful how you treat strangers, you may be entertaining angels without knowing.
- In Genesis 32 we see Jacob wrestling with an angel in physical form.
- Daniel 7 and Revelation 5 tell us there are ten thousand times ten thousand standing before him or myriads of angels. A countless number. There are A LOT of angels.
- They believed that the old covenant was brought to them from God by angels.

Acts 7:51-52 ⁵¹ “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. ⁵² Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, ⁵³ you who received the law as **delivered by angels** and did not keep it.”

Angels have roles and responsibilities

- Both the Greek and Hebrew word for Angel means “messenger.” There are many examples in the OT and NT of angels as messengers as we will see.
- Angels are also servants of God and serve at the pleasure of the King of kings.
- Angels are highly organized and divided into ranks.
- Genesis 3 – Cherubim guard the way to the Tree of Life.
- Isaiah 6 – Seraphim stand above the throne of God

- The angels bless the Lord in Psalm 103. - They were created for worship.
- They execute God's command. 2 Kings 19 – An angel kills 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in the night
- Matthew 4 – Angels minister to Jesus after His temptation
- Revelation 12 – Michael and his angels do battle against Satan

Angels are present in ALL redemptive acts

- Luke 1 – Gabriel brings the message of Jesus' conception to Mary.
- Matthew 1 – An angel appears to Joseph with divine instruction.
- Luke 2 – Angels announce the birth of Christ to the shepherds in the fields.
- Matthew 28: 3-4 An angel was at the tomb when the stone was rolled away saying, "His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow."

What other things does Scripture tell us about angels?

- Ephesians 6 tells us to be strong in the Lord, for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against angels. These are fallen angels.
- 1 Corinthians 6:3 says, "Do you not know that we are to judge angels?"
- Revelation 8:2 references 7 angels who are continually in God's presence. These are the same angels who blow the seven trumpets that release judgments on the earth in Revelation 8-11.

So, back to the question, why is it so important to say to the Hebrew Christians that Jesus is better than the angels?

- Not only did the Hebrew Christians have a high regard for angels, they also had false beliefs of angels. They elevated angels to a status second only to God. These false beliefs came from extra biblical writings and teaching of Rabbis.

A couple other examples of false beliefs where they elevated angels.

- They believed angels were God's senate and God consulted with the angels. They interpreted Genesis 1 saying, "Let **us** make man" that God was speaking to His angels.
- They believe there were angels who controlled the movements of the stars and kept things on course and a super-special angel who controlled the days. The calendar angel.
- They elevated angels to god like status giving them authority to the calendar, the seas, angels of frost, dew, rain, snow, hail, thunder and lightning. Some, as you can imagine came to worship angels.

Colossians 2:18 ¹⁸ Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels,

This is why the writer began with teaching that Jesus was better than the angels. **To understand the gift that they have in the new covenant, they have to understand who Jesus is.** Angels may have accompanied God in delivering the Law. The Law was regarded as Holy, given by God. Angels must therefore be greater. Their beliefs had evolved and there was imminent danger that they would worship angels. So, he started at the top of the ladder and **this becomes the whole purpose** of verses 4 – 14. The author declares Jesus as divinity in the first three verses and uses Scripture from the Hebrew bible, that they would know, to make 6 points as to why Jesus is better than the angels. And the new covenant in Jesus is SUPREMELY better than the old covenant. Do you know anyone who wants to make a point and goes overboard in justifying their position. Enough already, I get it. The author does this here.

Hebrews 1:4-5 ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

⁵ For to which of the angels did God ever say,

"You are my Son,
today I have begotten you"?

Or again,

“I will be to him a father,
and he shall be to me a son”?

- Number 1. Jesus is much superior to angels because the name he has inherited. **Ephesians 1:21** says Christ’s name is ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every **NAME** that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.
- The writer then asks “For to which of the angels did God ever say, and he quotes **Psalms 2:7** saying, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you? NONE.
- Then the writer quotes from the promise to David to provide a Messiah from his line that would establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ **I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.**
- These are the promises that the Hebrew Christians treasured.
- No angel did God ever say that. The angels are ministers and messengers. Jesus is declared God’s own Son. The name of Jesus is above all names and **Phil 2:10** says, “at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow.” **Jesus has the most excellent name, greater than all the angels.**

Hebrews 1:6 ⁶ And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God's angels worship him.”

- Verse 6 starts with “**And again.**” Scholars debate if this is establishing Christ’s superiority to angels as revealed in His first coming and His enthronement after the resurrection OR does this introduce another distinct event, the second coming of the firstborn? It makes sense that at the first coming the angels did worship Him as recorded in Luke.

Luke 2:13–14 “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ‘*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!*’”

- However, if it was referencing the second coming, it would be interpreted, “And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, (at a later time.”)
- Just to be clear, in both interpretations Jesus is the firstborn, not born-first, because Jesus was not born. The Greek word does not mean first in chronology, but first in rank or preeminence.
- The author makes his second point quoting from Deuteronomy 32 and Psalms 97 referring to angels as sons of God are to worship Christ.
- So, in either case the point is clear, Jesus is superior to angels because God commands the angels to worship Him. **Exodus 20:3** says, You shall have no other gods before Me. God would not command the angels to worship anyone but God. So, God commands the angels to worship Jesus because He is, as described in verse 3, the exact imprint of His nature, the very radiance of the Glory of God, the heir of all things and is the creator of the universe and the one who holds it together.
- I tend to go with the first coming of Christ and the angelic worship that happened at Jesus’ birth.

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- However, I really enjoyed and wanted to share the other interpretation of the coming worship of the lamb.
- Did you know that angels cannot see into the future? Remember, **Mark 13:32** says, even the angels do not know the hour of Christ’s return. **1 Peter 1:11-12** speaks of the prophets prophesying through the unveiling of the mystery through the Holy Spirit, but *the angels still long to look*. They do not know the future.
- We see the dilemma play out in Revelation Chapter 5 where God is holding the scroll that is sealed

Revelation 5:1-5 Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven

seals. ² And I saw a **mighty angel proclaiming** with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” (The angel does not know) ³ And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, ⁴ and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵ And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

Revelation 5:11-14 ¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice,

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might
and honor and glory and blessing!”

¹³ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

¹⁴ And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

- The father comes with the title deed to the earth. **Who can open the scroll?** And John, the writer of Revelation is crying because there is no one worthy. But then the elder says, “don’t cry John.” Here he comes, the lion of the tribe of Judah and Jesus Christ the Lamb takes the scroll when myriads of myriads (a myriad is a countless number) and thousands of thousands worshipping the Son because God the Father has come to the Son saying, The time is fulfilled, go and get your bride. Go and take your position on the throne to rule and reign over your kingdom.

- Does this verse reference the first or second coming of Jesus, the firstborn? It does not matter. In both instances the angels end up worshipping Him. Most commentators go with the first coming, but I do like the second interpretation as it really shows the elevation of Jesus and His superiority over angels.
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Hebrews 1:7 ⁷Of the angels he says,

“He makes his angels winds,
and his ministers a flame of fire.”

- The third point the author quotes **Psalm 104:4**. Psalm 104 is a Psalm about creation. The psalmist personifies light, the heavens, the waters, and in verse 4 he talks about the Creator, Jesus, who makes his angels winds and ministers of fire that carry His message. The angels are His messenger. BUT-OF-THE-SON ...verse 8-9.

Hebrews 1:8-9 ⁸But of the Son he says,

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,
the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.

⁹You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”

- For his fourth point he quotes **Psalm 45** which is a wedding, Psalm. When Christ ascended and entered the heavenly glory, He was anointed with the “oil of gladness.” The oil of gladness represented the filling of the Holy Spirit without measure.
- His throne is forever. He is the eternal God forever and ever. Today, Christ is the heavenly bridegroom awaiting the time when the Father tells Him, it is time. Go and get your bride. He is **sitting on the throne** and Angels minister to Him before the throne. The Son is better than angels.

Hebrews 1:10-12 ¹⁰ And,

“You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning,
and the heavens are the work of your hands;

¹¹ they will perish, but you remain;

they will all wear out like a garment,

¹² like a robe you will roll them up,

like a garment they will be changed. ^[a]

But you are the same,

and your years will have no end.”

- For his fifth point he is quoting **Psalms 102:25-27**. Jesus created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them including the angels. One day He will do away with the old creation and bring in a new creation. Everything around us changes, but He will never change. Hebrews 13:5 says, “He is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” Jesus is the creator of heaven and earth and all that is in them including the angels.

Hebrews 1:13-14 And to which of the angels has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?

¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

- The sixth and last point the writer quotes the Messianic **Psalms 110:1**. Psalm 110:1 says, “The Lord says to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, until I make thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.
- Jesus is now at the Father’s right hand, the place of honor.
- Angels are ministering spirits serving the Lord, but this verse also says they are serving the “heirs of salvation,” That would be me and you who believe.
- To which of the angels has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand?” NONE.

To the Hebrews, the Jewish Christians, seeking to avoid persecution were being tempted to go back to Judaism and the old covenant. The believed that angels delivered the Law and were second only to God. In demonstrating that Jesus is divine and the new covenant is supremely better than the old covenant, the author provides 6 points and all use Scripture from the Hebrew bible/OT to demonstrate Jesus is superior to the angels.

1. Verses 4 and 5 tell us Jesus has the most excellent name, greater than all the angels. At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow.
2. Verse 6 says, "Let all God's angels worship him." – God commands the angels to worship Jesus. Only God is to be worshipped.
3. Verse 7 says, Angels are but ministers who carry God's message.
4. Verses 8-9 says, Jesus is seated on the throne and has been anointed with the oil of gladness. Angels are not seated on the throne.
5. Verses 10-12 say, Jesus created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them including the angels.
6. Verses 13-14 tell us Jesus is now at the Father's right hand, the place of honor. Angels are ministering spirits serving the Lord, but also serving the "heirs of salvation," That would be me and you who believe. To which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand?" **NONE.**

In these last days God has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. No argument. Jesus is more superior to the angels and **His new covenant is vastly more superior than the old covenant.** THAT is the reason he is writing to convince the Hebrew Christians who are being persecuted not to go back to Judaism and the Mosaic Law. For those of us who are tempted to blend into the culture to fit in, we have so much more than these early Hebrew Christians. Be encouraged! We have the Scriptures – Genesis to Revelation. We have the new covenant promised in Jesus and we have the Spirit of God living in us.