



Jesus Christ – Superior to Angels

Series: Hebrews – An Anchor for the Soul

Hebrews 1:4-14

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Pastor Nick Shaffer

I want to let you in on a little secret this morning. This letter to the Hebrews, this sermon written to the Jewish Christians in Rome who were facing severe persecution for their faith in Christ, is really a one-point sermon. To these believers who every morning faced the question: “Is faith in and faithfulness to Christ really worth it?” the writer of Hebrews answers with a resounding “YES!” More than you know, more than you can imagine, more than you may be seeing right now in the midst of all of your trials. Jesus is great. Jesus is glorious. Jesus is excellent. Jesus is superior to everyone and everything else in the universe. Don’t ever underestimate the worth of Jesus Christ. In fact, He is so superior that it is impossible to overestimate Him. That’s the singular point expressed throughout this whole sermon.

Now, in setting the foundation for the rest of this sermon, the preacher of Hebrews has already spoken of the excellence of Christ in first three verses of this letter. He jumped right into the deep end of the pool, didn’t he? He has told us the God who has spoken throughout history through His prophets and has spoken finally, fully and uniquely to us in these last days through His son. The revelation and truth that is in Jesus Christ far surpasses and, in fact, brings to completion and culmination all the prophecies of God throughout the ages. Jesus is it, right? He has also showed us that all of creation, the entire universe belongs to Jesus by the decree of God the Father – that this world right now and the coming Kingdom belong to Him. He has showed us that Jesus was the agent of Creation, that the power to create all things out of nothing belongs to Him. We have seen that manifested glory of God belongs to Him, the sustaining power that upholds the universe is found in Him, that the work and power of redemption and salvation of sinners is found only in Him. He has spoken to us of the reigning and exalted majesty of Jesus. In all of this, the preacher of Hebrews is driving home the supremacy and glory of Jesus Christ, giving to the Hebrew Christians a much needed vision of the Christ in whom they had placed their faith, to whom they had surrendered their lives, and in whom they had pledged their hope in life and death – a fresh

vision of the supremacy of Jesus Christ that would embolden, encourage, and strengthen them in their resolve to be faithful to Christ despite the temptations to fall away. It's just what they needed. It's what we need, right?

Today, in the text that we are looking at, we are going to see the writer of Hebrews establish the superiority of Jesus to the angels of God. And I want you to see how he is going to go about this, because it is very important. For the rest of this sermon, we are going to see the writer of Hebrews ground what he says in the OT Scriptures, the Scriptures that were available to these Hebrew Christians in Rome. Everything that he is going to teach them is going to be firmly established in the Word of God and that is very important to see. This isn't just human philosophy, or his own imagination; it's not human wisdom or the wisdom of the age; this isn't just opinion divorced from reality – this is all established in God's Word, in eternal truth with a capital T. He is going to take passages from the OT and expound them, truths established in God's Word and show how they apply to Jesus Christ.

Three Abiding Convictions He does because of three abiding convictions. First, the writer of Hebrews is convinced that the OT is a Christ-centered, Christ-revealing book. In other words, he understands the underlying purpose of the OT is to reveal Jesus Christ. Not that the history that is written there is not accurate or important – it is. But he also understands the nature of prophecy and he looks beyond the initial meaning of the words, and without denying the truth of their original context, sees a further and more important message in the words. In other words, he sees the message of Jesus Christ everywhere present in the OT. Now, we might be tempted to say, “Well, that's great for him, but how do we know he's right to do that?” And the answer is, he's in the greatest of company in doing it. It's just what Jesus, the Son of God, truth incarnate, did. You remember the story, and if you don't I'll tell you, of when Jesus, after His resurrection, met up with some of His disciples on the road to Emmaus. They were discouraged and hopeless after the crucifixion of Christ and Jesus appeared to them along the road. And this is what Luke records for us: **“And he said to them, “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our**

company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.” And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Luke 24:17–27, ESV)
The message of the OT is Jesus.

Second, the writer of Hebrews was absolutely convinced, as well, that the OT is a book with abiding relevance to our lives. Its message is not dry, dusty, old and antiquated, but its message and principles were just as relevant to first-century Christians and 21st century Christians as when the promises and principles of God were first revealed in OT times.

Again, all of this is very important, because it is all the difference between divine truth, which is priceless, and human imagination, which isn't. His third conviction is this: He understands that unless what He believes and teaches is rooted and grounded in God's eternal truth, it isn't worth the breath he uses to speak or the ink he spills to write AND it will be of no eternal, practical, and lasting worth to the Hebrews. So the writer of Hebrews is going to take up the Word of God and show us that Jesus is far, far superior in His excellence and glory than the angels of God. Now, the obvious question is, why angels? Why start here?

Why Angels? That's a good question. Certainly, there are many people who are fascinated with angels in our own culture. If someone is “spiritual,” most often they have some concept of angels. Now, some thoughts of angels are sort of foolish and fanciful – sort of like fairies and pixies and genies that get you a good parking spot at Walmart, that you pin on your lapel or hang on the fridge – the little “Precious Moments” angels that look like cute little kids complete with teardrop eyes and little halos. There were the angels in that TV series, “Touched By an Angel” where angels were presented as heavenly psychologists proclaiming a soothing message of love from an all-embracing, and non-judgmental “god.” Before that, some of you may remember “Highway to Heaven” where Michael Landon portrayed a more macho angel who handled more manly problems. With those sorts of “angels” it hardly seems worth 11 verses to prove that Jesus is superior, right? It seems like overkill.

But there is a more dangerous strain of “angelology” in our day – its all over the bookstores – in which people claim to receive revelation from angels, and describe how to talk to your angels, and pray to your angels, and commune with your angels, and receive guidance from your angels, even how to worship your angels. There’s an obvious danger here. Scripture tells us that: **“Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.” (2 Corinthians 11:14, ESV)** So this unscriptural obsession with angels is deadly dangerous to the soul. And even more, this exaltation of “angels” leads to a devaluation of Jesus Christ. Christ gets lost in the “spiritual” mix. Thinking about it like this, we can see why these verses are so important.

But we especially see the importance of this section, and why the writer of Hebrews compares Jesus to angels, when we have a grasp of what Jews in those days – and remember these Hebrew Christians grew up in Jewish homes – believed about angels. It was a mix of truth and error, of reality and fantasy. Let me explain. First, some of their beliefs about angels were absolutely correct. They rightly understood angels to be the most awesome and powerful of God’s created beings, shining in glorious light, burning with holiness, awesome in their appearance. They exist in vast numbers and serve God and execute His purposes. They rightly understood them to be messengers of God’s will (the word “angel” means messenger) – they had appeared to Abraham for instance, and helped to deliver the Law to Moses on Mt Sinai, and they were also the instruments of God’s judgment – as an example, slaying the entire Assyrian army, 185,000 men, in one night. They understood the angels to be protectors of God’s people. In 2 Kings 6, we read the story of Elisha and his servant in Dothan: **“When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” He said, “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Then Elisha prayed and said, “O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see.” So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.” (2 Kings 6:15–17, ESV)** They rightly understood that the angels continuously worship and praise the God they serve. They rightly understood that the angels would be God’s agents in the final earthly judgment to come. They had a lot of correct beliefs regarding the angels.

But they also had some unorthodox and bizarre traditions regarding them, as well. They had wrongly come to believe the angels acted as God’s senate; that God could do nothing

without first consulting them and getting their approval. They had come to wrongly believe that there was an angel who controlled history, one who was over the sea, angels of frost, dew, rain, snow, hail, thunder and lightning, even angels who were wardens of hell and torturers of the damned. Crazy stuff. But here's the thing, like the modern conception of angels, it introduced this series of beings other than Jesus, through whom men and women could supposedly make their approach to God. They came to believe that it was angels who bridged the gulf between God and man.

Now look, it wasn't the purpose of the writer of Hebrews to correct all of the misconceptions about angels (not that it's not important, it just wasn't his focus), rather his intent was to show that no matter what these Hebrew Christians believed about angels – and they believed that angels were awesome and glorious and the greatest of all God's creation – that Jesus far surpassed them all in glory. He wants to show them that Jesus is far superior to the angels and that when you compare them side-by-side, you see that however glorious they may think angels to be, their significance pales by comparison, their glory is dwarfed by the divine glory of Jesus Christ. And so he uses a series of quotations from the OT to show that Jesus is infinitely superior to the angels. Let me show you. This is awesome. First, He shows us that Jesus has

A Superior Name (4-5) The writer of Hebrews says, pick it up at the end of verse 3: ***“After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. 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”?”*** (Hebrews 1:3–5, ESV) The writer of Hebrews is saying, “Jesus is as superior to the angels as the name that He has is greater than theirs.” What is that great name? It's clear from the context that it is the name of “Son.” The angels were sometimes referred to in the plural as “the sons of God,” little “s,” and believers are called the “children of God,” but neither angels nor believers are referred to as the unique “Son” of God and that's the point. It is a name that belongs only to Jesus as proven by His incarnation, His death on the cross for our sins, and especially the resurrection.

Let me show you. The writer of Hebrews is quoting first from Psalm 2, when he says: ***For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”?*** That word “begotten” is the key word. It has the idea of declaring or manifesting to the full. Paul

helps us to understand this in his sermon recorded for us in Acts 13. There he says: **“And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers (salvation), this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.” (Acts 13:32–33, ESV)** Then in Romans 1:4, Paul writes, **“concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,” (Romans 1:3–4, ESV)** Here’s the point. There’s a relationship between the word begotten and the resurrection. When God raised our Lord Jesus from the dead, having been crucified for our sins, God declared Him to be more than a man, but the very Son of God, manifesting before the world His place as God’s unique Son.

That second quotation, **“I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son,”** comes from 2 Samuel 7:14 where God promised to King David that he would be a father to his son Solomon and that Solomon would build the temple. But the greater fulfillment of that promise is found in David’s greater Son, Jesus. As the angel told Mary in Luke 1:31-32: **“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,” (Luke 1:31–32, ESV)**

That’s what it means that Jesus became **superior to angels...** not that He wasn’t to begin with. He has always and eternally been superior to the angels. But, Jesus became man, for a time, in appearance lower than the angels, but now it has been revealed that He is and has been greater all along. As glorious and exalted as the angels are, no angel was ever humiliated for you; no angel ever hung on the cross bearing the full weight of your sins and sins of the world. But the Son of God, who is superior to angels, He shed His blood and rose from the dead for you. He alone is God’s unique Son. He has been exalted and revealed as the true Son of God by His resurrection from the dead. So then, to whom should we turn for salvation? Whom shall we worship and follow as Lord, except the one proclaimed to be worthy as the Son of God? He has a superior name and He has

A Superior Honor (6) He continues saying: **“And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.”” (Hebrews 1:6, ESV)** Don’t be thrown by the word, “firstborn” – it doesn’t mean firstborn in the sense of being the oldest child in a particular family. It refers to the one that has the special place of honor with the father and

who shares in His authority, the one who is superior to all others and holds the place of excellence. That person is Jesus.

The writer of Hebrews quotes from Psalm 97, from the Greek translation of the OT, when he says: **“Let all God’s angels worship him.”** And that’s the point. He is greater than the angels because the angels worship Him! John describes the incredible worship scene in heaven in Revelation 5. There he writes: **“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, 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!””** (Revelation 5:11–12, ESV)

Therefore, since Jesus has inherited the name of “Son,” manifesting His unique glory as the Son of God, He is the One to whom the angels submit, and revere, and worship. They worship Him because He is greater than they are. We are to take a clue from them and worship Jesus, too. And he goes on to show that Jesus has

A Superior Status (7-9) He says: **“Of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.” But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.””** (Hebrews 1:7–9, ESV) See what the writer is doing here. He is taking two passages, the first from Psalm 104 and the second from Psalm 45 and he is using them to draw a powerful contrast between Jesus and the angels. The angels are the servants of God – the Psalmist speaks symbolically calling them “winds” and “a flame of fire.” Winds shift and flames burn out. That points to the changing nature of their service. God commands them and they do their thing. And they draw their life from Him. They serve Him! And the writer of Hebrews sets that truth in contrast to the eternal sovereignty and glory of Christ.

God the Father says to the Son, **“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”** It is Jesus who sits on the throne and Jesus is nothing less than the King of the

Empire of God. He is not merely a great leader, or a great man, or even the greatest of the prophets, not even the highest of angels, He is God in the fullest sense of the word. His rule is marked by a love for righteousness and a hatred of wickedness – His entire life testifies to that fact. His power and authority are righteous power and authority. And He has been anointed with the oil of gladness, of joy. The joy of redeeming a people for Himself. The joy of His triumph over sin and death and His return to His rightful glory as God. Jesus is never depressed, never discouraged, never frustrated. He is eternally joyful because **“Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases,”** (Psalm 115:3, ESV) including commanding the angels.

Here’s the point. If the Father establishes the deity and the sovereignty of Christ, then our confession of Him, our regard for Him ought to be the same. Can we say that we believe in Christ and not submit to Him as Lord, as the angels do? No! Jesus said, **““Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”** (Luke 6:46, ESV) We can’t! That’s the point. He has a superior status – Sovereign Lord and God – and He has

A Superior Life (10-12) The writer of Hebrews continues saying: **“And, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.””** (Hebrews 1:10–12, ESV) The quotation here is from Psalm 102 and it helps to understand the context and content of Psalm 102. Earlier in the psalm, the writer laments the decaying nature of life, how all things pass away, the weakness and mortality of mankind as a result of sin. He says, for instance: **“For my days pass away like smoke, and my bones burn like a furnace. My heart is struck down like grass and has withered... For I eat ashes like bread and mingle tears with my drink, because of your indignation and anger; for you have taken me up and thrown me down. My days are like an evening shadow; I wither away like grass.”** (Psalm 102:3–11, ESV) Those words are hard to hear. True, but hard.

But then, the Psalmist looks to the Lord and finds hope. This universe is passing away and everything in it, but not Jesus and not those who trust in Him. In fact, get the picture. The universe is compared to your favorite old t-shirt or sweatshirt, the clothes you love and wear when no one is around, the ones your spouse tries to get you to throw away. It is unraveling and wearing down like the law of entropy says it will. It’s how it is designed. But rather than just running down and pattering to a close, its end will come quickly. Jesus will roll it all up

like a garment and exchange the old for the new heavens and earth. It will be as easy for Him as changing a shirt. This universe is passing away, but Jesus will remain and so will His people who are trusting in Him alone for salvation and life.

To the suffering Jewish believers who first heard these words, they must have felt like a sweet breeze in the midst of the heat of affliction. Their world was threatening to come apart at the seams, but Christ remained the same, eternal and unchanging and faithful. In fact, in closing this section, the writer of Hebrews looks to the certain future that awaits Christ and those who are His.

A Superior Destiny (13-14) Summing this all up, he says: ***“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’? Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?”*** (Hebrews 1:13–14, ESV) He quotes first from Psalm 110 and the picture is awesome. Here is the picture of Jesus’ absolute superiority and supremacy over all things. He is victorious overall and He is not threatened by any foe that comes against Him. In the ANE, it was commonplace that a defeated king would lie on the ground before a conquering king and kiss his feet. Then the victorious king would place his foot on the neck of the conquered foe, indicating his utter superiority and his beginning reign over everything that king once possessed. What is true of ancient warfare is true of Christ. Christ’s enemies – sin, Satan, death, unbelieving sinners – all will submit themselves in defeat at the feet of Christ, including all the angels who rebelled with Satan against God. This is the certain future. Christ will conquer, the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign forever and ever. And united with Him by faith, we will reign with Him.

And what of us in the meantime? Christ commands His angels and sends them forth as ***ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation.*** In ways that we may or may not ever be aware, Jesus commands the angels to minister and serve His people for Christ’s sake, because we are His. What an awesome thought. Jesus is far greater than the angels – He is the King of angels, the King of glory, and the faithful King over His church.

What Do We Take From This? Here's what the writer of Hebrews means for us and for the Hebrew Christians to see: What can you possibly need in this world or in the world to come that can be found anywhere except in Christ? Everything we need in our human frailty, our weakness, and our sin is found abundantly in Him who loves us and gave Himself for us, who reigns as Savior and Lord and who remains the same forever and whose days shall have no end. Do you need forgiveness of sins? See Him exalted and know that His sacrifice is all you need for pardon with God. No matter what the sin, no matter how great the sin, no matter how complicated the sin; no matter how offensive the sin, there is a way of forgiveness, Jesus Christ. Do you need to be made at peace with God? He is seated in heaven, his perfect work of salvation the testimony to acceptance with God through faith. Do you need a new heart, a new life, a renewed Spirit, strength and endurance to follow Him? This is the one who can roll up the heavens and the earth by His power and make them new. By His power He changes hearts and lives and He sends forth His angels to minister to you in your need. Do you need guidance and direction? Are you facing choice and decisions, troubles that cause you fear and worry? Christ is enthroned in power, a Savior and Lord who loves you and cares for you with wisdom and power, who reigns in righteousness, who will direct your paths. Do you fear death? He is the one who has conquered death and who will put all of His enemies – sin, death, hell, Satan, under His feet! He is the only way to know God and have our sins forgiven. He is Lord and He is God and He is far greater than we can even imagine. The Scripture proves it.

It is believing and knowing these things these things about Jesus that gives strength to our souls and leads us to trust and glorify and serve Christ with our blood-bought lives. There is nothing that you might need that is not found in Christ. There is nothing that you might face that is not already in submission to Jesus. He is the King of the Empire of God.

But let me say this, it is one thing to acknowledge Christ's greatness and His worthiness to be praised and it is another to come to Him personally seeking your own salvation. God the Father has declared Jesus to be glorious and worthy of praise because He deserves it. But that is not the only reason. God exalted the Son and points us to His glory so that we might have our eyes opened to see Jesus as He is and so that we can be reconciled to the Father through faith in the Son. That is why the eternal son became man, and as a man was declared to be the Son of God in power – it was for our sakes, because He loves us, so that we might be saved through faith in Him alone.

How could we ever think of rejecting or falling away from such a One as Jesus Christ, the Son of God? We must believe in Him and trust in Him with all that we have.

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