

We began our study in Hebrews with those first three verses that describe the wonder of who Jesus is. The author tells us that He is the final revelation of God, the heir of all things, the instrument God used to create everything, the radiance of God's glory, the exact imprint of His nature, the word of His power holds the universe together, yet He gave Himself to be the provision for the purification of our sins. He is the One who sits at the right hand of God, the place of power and authority. That may be the loftiest description of Jesus in the Bible. Certainly, no other being can compare with this description. That is the theme of the author as we move on to the following passages, Jesus' supremacy as compared to all others.

It appears that the author's concern is that this group of Jewish believers are tempted to slip back into Judaism to avoid persecution. He is trying to help them see that all that Judaism offers falls so short of the fullness the Messiah has brought. He first takes on the comparison with angels.

Angels were the subject of much speculation in the first century. Jews believed they could take on the appearance of humans. We have our own story of one such possible event during the time of our brother Connie's emergency. I was talking with a missionary this week and he told me of several inexplicable encounters that he thought were angels. Hebrews 13:2 tells us that we should be hospitable as you never know when you might be entertaining an angel. Angels are in the presence of God in heaven, ministering to Him (Hebrews 12:22). At times these beings guide and protect us, as we see in the last verse of this chapter. They delivered the Law to Moses (Hebrews 2:2). They are God's servants, doing His will (Psalm 103:20). One of them can defeat an entire army (2 Kings 19:35).<sup>1</sup>

*<sup>3b</sup> After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup> having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.* Hebrews 1:3b-4 Once Jesus completed His mission, offering Himself as the sacrifice for our sins in obedience to the Father, God returned Jesus to His rightful place of authority and power. After His resurrection, Jesus said that all authority in heaven and earth had been given to Him (Matthew 28:18). That is another way to say He is seated at the right hand of God. This is where the orders to angels are issued. His position is vastly superior to theirs.

The name He has inherited is a way of addressing His heavenly position. His name is His essence and speaks of His authority. That name and position are described in the following verse. *<sup>5</sup> 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 1:5 Angels are created to be servants of God. Jesus has forever been one with God (John 1:1-2). God declared, "This is my Son!" That was written by David, the ancestor of Jesus, a thousand years before it came to pass (Psalm 2:7). The author also

**Commented [PW1]: Hebrews 13:2 (ESV)**  
<sup>2</sup> Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

**Commented [PW2]: Hebrews 12:22 (ESV)**  
<sup>22</sup> But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,

**Commented [PW3]: Psalm 103:20 (ESV)**  
<sup>20</sup> Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word!

**Commented [PW4]: 2 Kings 19:35 (ESV)**  
<sup>35</sup> And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.

**Commented [PW5]:** The angel of the Lord in this passage may refer to the pre-incarnate Christ.

**Commented [PW6]: Matthew 28:18 (ESV)**  
<sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

**Commented [PW7]: John 1:1-2 (ESV)**  
<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
<sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God.

**Commented [PW8]: Psalm 2:7 (ESV)**  
<sup>7</sup> I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you.

uses as his proof text 2 Samuel 7:14a, *"I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son."* While this may sound like the day of Jesus' birth into this world, the Apostle Paul makes it clear that this refers to exaltation and enthronement of Jesus as Son after the resurrection. Romans 1:4 tells us that Jesus "was declared with power to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead." Acts 13:32-33 tells us that this exaltation was the fulfillment of Psalm 2:7.

God was speaking to David and telling him of the heir that would come after him, Solomon. But He was also alluding to the ultimate heir, the eternal Son, who would reign forever. The author of Hebrews point is that the title of Son, is a position that is vastly superior to that of angels. The Son directs the angels. The Son is eternal, while the angels came into being through Him.

This is the first in series of quotations from the Scriptures, most of which the Jews consider to be messianic passages. The author is making a case for not returning to Judaism that does not acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. He uses Scripture after Scripture to back up each of His points. Some of the Scriptures at first glance seem to be taken out of context, but the author sees the larger context and the fact that all of Scripture was inspired and ultimately pointing to Jesus. If we are trying to make a point or trying to convince others of our interpretation, we should do the same. Our convictions should come from Scripture and we should be able to point others to the source of our convictions.

*<sup>6</sup> And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."* Hebrews 1:6 Firstborn is also a title of authority (Psalm 89:27). Its use does not necessarily mean first to be born. The title belonged to the male heir of the father's title and obligations. Jesus had the title of firstborn before He was born to Mary (Colossians 1:15). But when He was born into a human body, God commanded the angels to worship Him (Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalm 97:7). Worship is due not simply to one who is superior, but to Him who is divine (Exodus 34:14). Angels know they are unworthy of worship (Revelation 19:10). Only fallen angels crave the worship of others. Satan tried to turn this command of God on its head by offering Jesus the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would just worship him (Matthew 4:9).

As created beings who are fallen, we can easily slip into this perverted desire. We can so easily crave the respect of men that we even desire their praise and submission which is a form of worship. When we exalt ourselves above others, we are coming dangerously close to the "I will" of Satan (Isaiah 14:13-14). Everything we have is a gift from God. To claim it is of ourselves is to rob God of the glory rightfully due Him. The Son is superior to the angels because He is worthy of their worship and ours as well. The holy Trinity alone is worthy of worship.

*<sup>7</sup> Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire."* Hebrews 1:7 Quoting Psalm 104:4 the author points out the adaptable splendor of the

**Commented [PW9]: Acts 13:32-33 (ESV)**

<sup>32</sup> And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers,  
<sup>33</sup> 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."

**Commented [PW10]: Psalm 89:27 (ESV)**

<sup>27</sup> And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.

**Commented [PW11]: Colossians 1:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

**Commented [PW12]: Deuteronomy 32:43 (ESV)**

<sup>43</sup> "Rejoice with him, O heavens; bow down to him, all gods, for he avenges the blood of his children and takes vengeance on his adversaries. He repays those who hate him and cleanses his people's land."

**Commented [PW13]: Psalm 97:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> All worshipers of images are put to shame, who make their boast in worthless idols; worship him, all you gods!

**Commented [PW14]: Exodus 34:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God),

**Commented [PW15]: Revelation 19:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

**Commented [PW16]: Matthew 4:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."

**Commented [PW17]: Isaiah 14:13-14 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north;  
<sup>14</sup> I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'

angels, but notes that their splendor is given them by the Son. They are His ministers. The reader is expected to understand that the quote comes from a psalm that points to the LORD God as the creator and sustainer of all things. These actions are ascribed to Jesus in the opening verses of the chapter. Since Jesus gave them such splendor, how much more glorious is He?

<sup>8</sup> *But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.* Hebrews 1:8 Jesus has always reigned and will forever reign. Notice that God refers to the Son as God in this quote. We can say without question that the believers in the A.D. mid 60s understood that Jesus is one with the God. Jews understood that the scepter of David would forever belong to the Messiah (Isaiah 9:7). While the angels serve their Creator, Jesus is the One reigning over them throughout time. And while some of the angels fell, Jesus reigns in uprightness forever.

<sup>9</sup> *You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.*" Hebrews 1:9 Verses 8 and 9 are a quotation from Psalm 45:6-7. In Psalm 45 the Messiah is designated as God. Unlike what the world would have us believe, this verse shows us that real joy is inseparable from righteousness. "The biblical teaching is clear. Gladness is not a human achievement. It never admits of direct pursuit. (You won't attain it by chasing after it.) God confers it, 'God... has anointed you,' and it is joined to righteousness with a mighty therefore."<sup>2</sup> Later in this letter we'll also see that Jesus' joy came through suffering (Hebrews 12:2) as is often the case with us as well (Hebrews 12:3-11).

"To love righteousness is the fulfillment of the fourth beatitude. It is to possess righteousness, to be completely at one with it, to be devoted to it without the least reservation. This is a clear description of Jesus. But it is also the final word about the world in which we live—here is its real ruler. This is the ultimate nature of things. This is the Christian answer to the feeble ethic which sees in the right only a fleeting human custom accepted by the group for a time, and in a tiny oasis encompassed by a vast moral desert. This is the kind of emphasis the interpreter should constantly make. It rings throughout the Bible. This sturdy faith alone can restore moral backbone to any morally flabby generation."<sup>3</sup>

How do you picture Jesus? He is more joyful than any one you've ever met. As joy is the second fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), Jesus exemplifies joy more than any of us. It's a mistake to think of Jesus as a stern old man ready to punish you if you step out of line. He is a loving and joyful groom who knows that His work in you will one day be finished and that He will have a glorious bride without spot or blemish (Ephesians 5:27). He knows that righteousness will prevail and sin will one day be no more. He knows pain and sorrow will cease. He knows every detail of the "happily ever after" that we can't even imagine. So the next time you envision Jesus, see Him with the confident

**Commented [PW18]: Isaiah 9:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

**Commented [PW19]:** Interpreter's Bible, The - Exposition - Volume 11

**Commented [PW20]: Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

**Commented [PW21]: Hebrews 12:3-11 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.  
<sup>4</sup> In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.  
<sup>5</sup> And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.  
<sup>6</sup> For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."  
<sup>7</sup> It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?  
<sup>8</sup> If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.  
<sup>9</sup> Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?  
<sup>10</sup> For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.  
<sup>11</sup> For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

**Commented [PW22]:** Interpreter's Bible, The - Exposition - Volume 11

**Commented [PW23]: Galatians 5:22 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

**Commented [PW24]: Ephesians 5:27 (ESV)**

<sup>27</sup> so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

smile of One who knows the outcome of all this fallen world is not just good, but gloriously perfect. And isn't that the confidence and joy we should have as our faith in His ability grows?

*<sup>10</sup> And, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands;* Hebrews 1:10 Verses 10 through 12 are a quotation from Psalm 102:25-27. Once again the reader is reminded that Jesus made it all. They can try to write Him out of the picture, but even as they read the Old Testament scriptures in Jewish synagogues, they will be reminded again and again that they have walked away from the One who is the central theme of Scripture. The foundation of the earth is His creation. Today we know that is the very laws of physics. Jesus made them.

I was watching a special on mathematics, and they were showing that the number pi comes up not only in circles but in probability and all around in nature. They were saying that it is as if a designer used certain constants like pi, the Golden Ratio, and Golden Rule in their plans. "As if?" Why do they sometimes call it the *divine* ratio? **Jesus used patterns of order in creating the visible world, perhaps to give us a clue as to His obvious existence.**

The heavens are the work of His hands. There is no need for me to elaborate on the wonder of the universe. We live in a day when the information is available to most everyone. The distances and sizes of stars and galaxies are almost impossible to fathom, and we are only beginning to see the wonder of it all (Psalm 19:1). The micro-world is just as amazing and awe inspiring.

*<sup>11</sup> they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, <sup>12</sup> 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 1:11-12 As wondrous and amazing as the universe is, it will wear out. Physicists know this. It is one thing that points to a beginning. All energy systems eventually wear down. The Word of God declares that there will be a new heaven and earth (Revelation 21:1). Though the universe is able endure for an incredible amount of time, its end will come. But by contrast, God never changes. He is infinite, as is His Son. The author of Hebrews tells us in the last chapter, *<sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.* Hebrews 13:8 (ESV) Creation is subject to change and decay but not the Creator! Angels are created; Jesus is the unchanging Creator.

*<sup>13</sup> 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"?* Hebrews 1:13 Now the writer introduces Psalm 110. He will use it numerous times throughout the letter. Jesus used it when referring to Himself (Matthew 22:44). The apostles use it when preaching of Christ (Acts 2:34; 1 Corinthians 15:25). The Jews clearly saw it as a psalm about the Messiah. Those Jews who received this letter knew that God the Father had placed Jesus at His right hand. No angel ever had that much authority, nor would they ever.

**Commented [PW25]: Psalm 19:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

**Commented [PW26]: Revelation 21:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

**Commented [PW27]:**

**Commented [PW28R27]: Matthew 22:44 (ESV)**

<sup>44</sup> "'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet"?"

**Commented [PW29]: Acts 2:34 (ESV)**

<sup>34</sup> For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand,

**Commented [PW30]: 1 Corinthians 15:25 (ESV)**

<sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

By contrast again, angels are servants of the one sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>14</sup> *Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?* Hebrews 1:14 Jesus sends them out to serve for our sake. Jesus knows those who are His. He knows who will receive His gracious gift of salvation. When we need help, when temptations are too strong, or when the enemy tries to snuff out our lives, Jesus can intervene with angelic support. We see a number of cases of this in Scripture. There were several angel assisted jail breaks in the Book of Acts (Acts 5:19; 12:7). In Acts 8:26, an angel sent Philip on a mission on lonely road to one foreigner. In Acts 10:3, an angel brought an answer to the prayer of Gentile Centurion that resulted in the man's whole household being saved.

But these angels' work is not only back in Biblical times. In Preaching the Word commentary by Kent Hughes, he documents stories from China, Indonesia, Africa, New Hebrides, to South America. In each case a mission compound was about to be overrun by the local people who were ready to kill everyone inside. The attackers in each case gave up and later reported that tall men with shining garments and drawn swords surrounded the mission center. Does God have special platoon of angels for just such situations? In all these cases then and now, angels are serving the heirs of salvation.

Chapter two will continue with this theme of Jesus being greater than angels. His purpose is to convince the first readers and anyone else who might read his letter, that in the spiritual realm, there is no comparison with Jesus. Yes, there are powers both good and evil, but none compare to Him. He gives the orders to the good angels, and He limits the work of the fallen ones. He is in charge! There is none like Him.

A word of caution is due. **The work of angels is almost always anonymous. That is because they want all the glory to go to the Father and the Son.** When undo attention is put on angels, we are focusing on the wrong thing. The author only speaks of them because the Jews were putting too much attention on them when the focus should have been on Jesus. His whole point is that Jesus is infinitely greater.

We should be thankful that the One at the right hand of God loved us enough to die for our sins. He will use His servants, the angels, to assist us who are heirs of salvation. Why would we look to angels when we have access to their Commander? Why would we look for any other spiritual solution to any situation in life when it is Jesus who is in the place of all power and authority? Part of the message of Hebrews is that we have access to Him, and we should boldly use that freedom in our times of need (Hebrews 4:16). The One in the place of all authority loves you and me, and He orders the angels to minister to us. What a comfort that should be to our hearts each and every day! Whatever you are facing or will face in the future, the One at the right hand of God who gave Himself for you will see you through and mold and shape you in the process.

**Commented [PW31]: Acts 5:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said,

**Commented [PW32]: Acts 12:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands.

**Commented [PW33]: Acts 8:26 (ESV)**

<sup>26</sup> Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert place.

**Commented [PW34]: Acts 10:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius."

**Commented [PW35]: Hebrews 4:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

## Questions

- 1 Review the first three verses of Hebrews 1.
- 2 What reason does the writer give in verse 4 for Jesus' superiority to angels?
- 3 How is that defined in verse 5?
- 4 Why are so many verses quoted?
- 5 Who can rightfully be worshiped?
- 6 What does verse 8 tell us about the concept of Jesus then?
- 7 Did verse 9 change your impression of Jesus?
- 8 How should that affect us?
- 9 What contrast is set before us in verses 11 and 12?
- 10 What are angels assigned to do?