

## BETTER THAN THE ANGELS

Hebrews pt 2: Hebrews 1:4-2:5  
Stonebrook Sunday AM, 1/28/24, Matt Heerema

Please turn with me to Hebrews chapter 1.

We get very curious about angels, don't we? They make their appearances throughout the Bible at very important times, bringing messages (in fact "angel" just means "messenger"), we see them interacting with humans, sometimes fighting battles, which means they are capable of interacting with the physical world, including fighting (and protecting!).

There are even hints in the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah that some of the angels followed satan in a rebellion against God and so were kicked out of heaven. There are strange stories in Genesis about "the sons of God" (a phrase used of angelic beings) interbreeding with mankind and creating "The Nephilim" - I always know when a new Christian has started reading their Bible in earnest when they ask me what the Nephilim are. I'm not going to get into that this morning.

Most of the time angelic beings come and go without much explanation. One of the very few places in the Bible that does give any information about what angels are is our passage today.

But even today's passage is not about angels. It is about Jesus.

The author of Hebrews knew that his audience, like us, were very interested in angels! In fact we have some 1st century extra-biblical writing that indicates they may have been a little obsessed by them. Even in the scriptures, we see the apostles warning us not to pay attention to people who insist that a lot of attention be given to angels.

Although the Bible never explicitly says so, we see in Hebrews chapter 2 that Jews at the time (and Jewish converts to Christianity) believed that when Moses received God's word of the law on Mount Sinai (which we studied in our series last semester in Exodus), the message from God was delivered through angels. So, the author of Hebrews needs to help pry peoples attention and fascination away from angels, and he does so by pointing out how much better Jesus, God the Son, is!

One of the things that Hebrews one teaches us, is that the Bible is intentionally vague about angels. The glimpses we do get of them are always meant to glorify God, not themselves. And any angel that tries to tell you different is selling something!

The preacher who wrote Hebrews explains Jesus's superiority to angels through a quick succession of Old Testament Quotations.

We are going to see today that Jesus is superior to the angels because

- Angels are spirit-beings, but Jesus is the God
- Angels are servants, but Jesus is the King
- Angels are fiery flames, But Jesus is the Judge
- Angels are part of creation, but Jesus is the Creator

### **Hebrews 1:4-14 (CSB)**

4 So he became superior to the angels, just as the name he inherited is more excellent than theirs.

5 For to which of the angels did he ever say, You are my Son; today I have become your Father, or again, I will be his Father, and he will be my Son?

6 Again, when he brings his firstborn into the world, he says, And let all God's angels worship him.

7 And about the angels he says: He makes his angels winds, and his servants a fiery flame, 8 but to the Son: Your throne, God, is forever and ever, and the scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of justice. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; this is why God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of joy beyond your companions. 10 And: In the beginning, Lord, you established the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands; 11 they will perish, but you remain. They will all wear out like clothing; 12 you will roll them up like a cloak, and they will be changed like clothing. But you are the same, and your years will never end.

13 Now to which of the angels has he ever said: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool?

14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve those who are going to inherit salvation?

## JESUS IS GOD

This prophesied Messiah, this prophesied "Son" had a very special in interesting relationship to God his "Father" – In verse 5 we see God calling Jesus his Son, and in verse 7 we see God calling Jesus, God.

Jesus is simultaneously God, *and* this prophesied Son. This shows us something crucial about God's nature. *Who* He is. *How* He is, and that concept has been called The Trinity. God is a Triune God. Meaning, a Three-One God.

**The Trinity** is difficult to explain, because there is nothing else like it in all creation. It is something that is unique to God. But it is best illustrated by this ancient concept called "The Shield of the Trinity."

The Father is God, The Son is God, The Holy Spirit is God, but the Father is not the Son or the Spirit, the Son is not the Father or the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father or the Son. There are three persons in one God.

A little mind bending, but we see it here. God, the Father calls Jesus, the Son, and also God. And importantly, this Psalm was written by Monotheists, whose most important truth about God is, the Great Commandment, affirmed by Jesus, "Hear or Israel, The Lord God is One..." (Deuteronomy 6:4). Hebrews 8 quotes Psalm 45 where God speaks to His "Messiah", His anointed one, elsewhere called God's Son, and God calls this Son "God."

Perhaps you have heard that there is nowhere in the Bible the explicitly says Jesus is God. This passage, and the Psalm it is referencing, both do.

## JESUS IS THE REIGNING KING

In verses 7 and 8 the preacher makes the biggest contrast between Jesus and the Angels. The angels are mere creatures, while Jesus is the reigning king!

We get some of the most clear teaching in the entire Bible about what angels are in verses 7 and 14. Pulling from Psalms 103 and 104, we see that angels are compared to wind and fire, meaning they are spirits, temporary, sent out for a purpose for a time, they are powerful and effective when God sends them out, but they are mere creations serving God's good pleasure.

When John wrote The Revelation, he had a vision of an angel, a glorious mighty angel, and was tempted to worship him:

**Revelation 19:10 (CSB)**

10 Then I fell at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers and sisters who hold firmly to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God, because the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Angels are "ministering servants" - "worshiping servants" - they are not the point. Christ is.

Christ, by contrast to the angels blowing around like wind and fire doing God's bidding, is *seated in the place of power and authority*.

## **JESUS IS THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE**

Verse 8 says he sits on the eternal throne and verse 9 tells us that his scepter, or his authority is used for justice, for truly carrying out what is right, and correcting what is wrong. He is currently doing that, judging the earth, and someday soon will return to earth to deliver his verdict.

## **JESUS IS THE ETERNAL CREATOR**

Verses 10-12 show us that Jesus is the Eternal Creator - This is why he has the right to judge. He made it all in the first place.

In light of this statement that Jesus is eternal, with no beginning or no end, verse 4 & 5 can feel a little tricky, they use this phrase: "Jesus Became...", he "became superior", he "Became the son"... Wasn't he always superior? Wasn't he always the son?

This passage is not referring to Jesus coming into existence, or transforming from one thing to another. Rather, it is talking about Jesus being revealed as something he already was, and having accomplished something that was always planned for Him to do.

Ephesians puts it this way.

### **Ephesians 1:20-22 (CSB)**

20 He exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens—21 far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he subjected everything under his feet and appointed him as head over everything for the church...

Jesus's finished work of redemption revealed him to all creation, humanity and heavenly beings, for who he already was: God the Son, Creator, and King of the Universe.

One more tricky phrase to deal with about Jesus. He is called the **Firstborn** - this is not referring to Jesus being created. He is eternal, without beginning or end.

This is not speaking of incarnation, (being born to Mary...) but of his position: the firstborn is the inheritor. This is speaking of Christ's exaltation after his resurrection.

These two phrases, "becoming" and "firstborn" refer to the glory and honor that God-the-Son received in accomplishing the work for which He was sent into the world.

What does the preacher say we are to do with this magnificent truth about who Jesus is?

## **PAY ATTENTION, AND HANG ON!**

He tells us not to get distracted by angels, or anything else, in paying attention to Jesus's finished work.

### **Hebrews 2:1-5 (CSB)**

1 For this reason, we must pay attention all the more to what we have heard, so that we will not drift away. 2 For if the message spoken through angels was legally binding and every transgression and disobedience received a just punishment, 3 how will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

This salvation had its beginning when it was spoken of by the Lord, and it was confirmed to us by those who heard him. 4 At the same time, God also testified by signs and wonders, various miracles, and distributions of gifts from the Holy Spirit according to his will. 5 For he has not subjected to angels the world to come that we are talking about.

The preacher is saying “pay attention to the good news I have for you! It’s all true, you’ve heard about the miracles, you see the church in action using God-given-gifts to love and care for each other!”

And to remind you of the good news this preacher brings, he states it simply at the beginning of chapter 1:

**Hebrews 1:3 (CSB)**

3 The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

If you want to know who God is, look to Jesus: he’s the exact picture!

If you are fearing a world that seems to be spinning out of control, look to Jesus, he’s got it all in his hands.

If you would be forgiven of your sins, look to Jesus. He has paid for all of them.

And having done all that, shown us who God is, created the universe and continuing to sustain it, he is sitting in the highest place of authority in the universe.

He sees it all, he sees you, he knows you, he cares for you, and he is able to help you.

Turn to him.