



SESSION OBJECTIVE: HEBREWS 1:4-14

To understand how the Son is more superior than the angels.

Read the Text:

“...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”? 6 And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.” 7 Of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.” 8 But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.” 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. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.” 13 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?” (Hebrews 1:4-14, ESV)

Study the Text:

The Superior Son

Hebrews 1:4-14 continues to develop the ways in which Jesus is supreme by paying special attention to the ways in which Jesus is superior to the angels. Engaging a slew of Old Testament Scriptures, the author of Hebrews demonstrates that though angels are powerful beings who deserve reverence for their high place before the LORD, they are subservient, lesser beings in comparison to the Son, and for several reasons. Below is a breakdown of some of the key themes and concepts that emerge in this passage.

THE ETERNALLY GENERATED SON

First, angels do not share the relationship the Son has with the Father. While the angels are routinely referred to collectively as “sons of God (Gen. 6:4; Deut. 32:8; Job 1:6, 38:7), there is no single instance of an individual angel being referred to as such. However, of the Son, God says: “You are my son, today I have begotten you.”

This quotation comes from Psalm 2:7, a well-known messianic Psalm that predicted that the Messiah would be a Son to God. Embedded into this Psalm is also a historical context that reflects a kingly coronation beginning with David. Thus, Psalm 2:7 conveys a sense of royalty to this Divine Son. The author of Hebrews also applies 2 Samuel 7:14 to Jesus: “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.”

The Sonship of Jesus Christ is a unique relationship that is important to the developing doctrine of the Trinity in the centuries that follow. Some have taken issue with the term “begotten,” arguing that this implies Jesus was created. However, the “begotten-ness” or what is eventually called “generation” of the Son needs clarification. The term “begotten” is not one of ontology, but relationship. In other words, “begotten” does not describe the nature of Christ; it describes the relational distinction between Him and the Father. How do we know this is true? Athanasius of Alexandria argued that if God is eternally Father, His Fatherhood is contingent upon an Eternal Son. If the Son is brought into existence, the Father’s identity also has a starting point. Athanasius argues that this line of reasoning collapses into absurdity. That the Son is an Eternal Son and that the Father is an Eternal Father indicates that there was never a time when they were not Father and Son, and thus the “eternal generation” of the Son does not describe the “making” of the Son, but is instead a term that makes a distinction between the two Persons of the Godhead. Jesus Christ, unlike the angels, is in a relationship with the Father as a Son.

THE ETERNALLY WORSHIPPED FIRSTBORN

Verse 6 continues: “And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship him.’” How is it that Jesus is greater than the angels? The angels worship Him. This was, of course, fulfilled at His birth. When the shepherds received word that the Messiah had been born, Luke 2:13-14 says: “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!’” Jesus is worshipped, and yet, only God should receive worship. The first commandment is clear: “You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3). And yet, God the Father declares the Son is worthy of worship, and those who come to know Him declare Him as God (Jn. 20:28).

THE ETERNALLY ROYAL GOD

Beyond that, angels are subservient to the Son. Verse 7 says: “He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.” The angels serve the Lord by carrying out His purposes and His will as created beings. But of the Son, He says: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions” (Heb. 1:8-9). Again, the author of Hebrews employs an Old Testament passage to make his case, this time Psalm 45:6-7. Interestingly, Psalm 45 is written from David to God, but it is framed in Hebrews as if God the Father is speaking directly to the Son. God the Father says to the Son: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.” This is one of the rare instances in Scripture where there is direct dialogue between the Persons of the Trinity. The contrast is clear - angels are subservient to God, but Christ has been given a throne and called “God” by God. This kind of language is never employed towards angels. Angels are important beings, but they are created and subordinated to God. Jesus Christ is neither.

THE ETERNALLY POWERFUL CREATOR

In light of the fact that angels are created beings, Hebrews also points out that Jesus Christ is not a created being by virtue of the fact that He is the Creator of all things. Verse 10 continues the divine speech of the Father to the Son: “And, ‘You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands.’” The Lord Jesus Christ is the one who laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, for it was the Word of God who spoke all things into existence (Gen. 1), and it is the Word of God who is both

God and who became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn. 1:1-2, 14). Jesus is not only the powerful Creator, but He is eternal: "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. But you are the same, and your years will have no end" (Heb. 1:11-12). Jesus will never perish. Things created have an expiration date, but Jesus Christ is eternal.

THE ETERNALLY EXALTED CHRIST

Finally, the author points out that Jesus has received far greater exaltation than the angels: "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 author employs Psalm 110:1 to make his final point, and the grammar is telling. The term "said" is in the perfect tense, which is a departure from the more common aorist tense that has been used. Both the perfect and the aorist tenses are past tenses, but there are differences in what they communicate. The aorist tense is an undefined moment in the past, something that happened and is now done. The perfect tense conveys a definite action in the past with ongoing results. That God "said" to Jesus, "sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool," happened at the moment of the exaltation of Jesus Christ, and the effects of this are ongoing; Jesus is still Lord, sitting at the right hand, waiting for His enemies to be made a footstool. The Father is still working, through the ministry of the Spirit, to bring about the fullness of time when He will send the Son again to bring completion to that which He has already been working.

What About Now?

Some false traditions have tried to diminish the identity of Jesus Christ, and Hebrews warns against such nonsense. Jesus is not a created being. He is not a "less-than God." He is not merely like an angel. He is superior to the angels in every way. He is the unique, one-of-a-kind Son of God. He is worshipped by angels. He is served by angels as the righteous King. He created the angels along with the rest of creation. He has been fully exalted by the Father. How much more then should He be exalted by His people? The primary takeaway of this text is the warning against diminishing the identity of Christ. If He is all the things verses 4 through 14 claim He is, how should that influence the way we serve and worship Him?

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Hebrews 1:4-5. According to verse 5, why is Jesus superior to angels? What verses are being quoted? What is their significance?

2. Read Hebrews 1:6 and Luke 2:13-14. What does the worship of Jesus by angels indicate?

Day Two

1. Read Hebrews 1:7. How are angels described here? What does this indicate about their status before God?

2. Read Hebrews 1:8-9. What verses are being quoted here? Who is speaking to the Son? What is being conveyed about the Son in this text?

Day Three

1. Read Hebrews 1:10. What attribute is given to the Son in verse 10?

2. Read Hebrews 1:11-12. What attribute is given to the Son in verses 11 and 12?

Day Four

1. Read Hebrews 1:13. Who is speaking to the Son in this verse? What does this reveal about the Son's place of exaltation?

2. Read Hebrews 1:14. In contrast, what level of exaltation do the angels receive?

Discuss the Text!

Session 2 Discussion: Worship the Lord

Jesus is worshipped by the angels (Heb. 1:6). How much more should we worship Him? Talk as a group about your worship rhythm and how you think about God when you worship. Do you think of the Father more? Or the Son? Or the Spirit? All three Persons are One God, and thus all three should be worshipped.

1. Icebreaker: Do you worship Jesus Christ? If so, how so? If not, why not?
2. Does it feel strange to worship Jesus specifically? If so, why?
3. Do you ever pray specifically to Jesus? As God, He is to be prayed to.
4. Does this text change the way you view the Lord's Supper? The Lord's Supper is an act of worship. Do you view it as such? If not, why not?
5. Why do you think most Christian cult groups deny the deity of Christ?
6. What do you need to change about your current approach to worship in light of this text?
7. Kid Talk (For Home): Read Revelation 5:1-14 together, and point out how the angels worship the Lamb, who is Jesus Christ.

Takeaways:

1. Jesus is superior to angels in that He is the unique Son of God, worshipped by angels.
2. Jesus is the eternal King, Creator, and Exalted One over the subservient angels.
3. Jesus is worthy of worship.