

Christ is Superior to the Angels**Introduction**

The preeminent place of Jesus Christ is clear from the first four verses of Hebrews chapter 1. He is: 1) the Son of God; 2) the heir of all things; 3) the creator of all; 4) One who shares the very essence of deity; 5) the sustainer of all things; 6) the purifier of all things; 7) at the right hand of God; and 8) better than the angels.

The Bible continues in verses 5 through 14 to justify the statement that the Son of God is better than the angels. The author uses seven quotations from the Old Testament to prove what he has asserted in verse 4. The OT would not initially be determinative in the mind of someone totally disassociated from God. But it makes for an open and shut case for a Jewish person, the presumed audience of the letter to the Hebrews.

You might notice that many of the quotes are direct addresses to the Son which are *not* addressed to angels. The implication is that God does not talk to angels like He talks to the Son. Also note that several of the quotations are placed into a question form (v. 5 twice and v. 13). The answers to these questions are understood to be “no” – God does not offer such things to the angels that He offers to His Son.

**1. The Son Has an Unique Relationship with the Father, v. 5****Ps 2:7, 2 Sam 7:14**

Both of these quotations are drawn from a Davidic covenant context. The idea of kingship and sovereignty is clearly present in both Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7. As Messiah, Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of these Davidic promises, because He is the ultimate Davidic King. He will sit on the throne of David over the nation of Israel, and over the world.

The whole idea of Father and Son language is natural for God the Father and God the Son, but it is not at all fitting for an angel.

The declaration “You are My Son” should not be taken to mean “You have just now become my Son” but rather “You have existed as My Son already.” See Rom. 1:4 which has a similar declaration.

For “Today I have begotten You,” the English connotation is that the son was born and began to exist today. However, the first phrase does not allow that interpretation. And there is not a physical “begetting” that the Father did to the Son anyway. Probably “Today I have become your Father” better conveys the Davidic covenant idea of God becoming the Father of the newly installed Davidic king (v. 6). This all meshes well with the 2 Samuel reference and is reflected in Psalm 89:27 as well. The begetting idea is also tied to Christ’s resurrection (Acts 13:33) and calling as high priest (Heb 5:5), so it is obviously far more sophisticated than just a “birth” notion.

## 2. The Son Receives Angelic Worship, v. 6

Deut 32:43

There is a technical difficulty with this verse. The phrase quoted in Hebrews does not occur in the original language copies of the OT we have. It is found in the OT used in the apostles' era, namely, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Its modern name is the *Septuagint* or *LXX*. It adds this text after the first phrase of Deuteronomy 32:43. The question that dogs every interpreter of Scripture is whether the extant Hebrew text is missing something and the LXX is correct, or if the LXX is incorrect and thus Hebrews is incorrect to quote it, or if it is simply new revelation given to the author without any direct OT referent. Without further data and a lot more study, the theologically safe conclusion is that Paul, the human author under inspiration, has it right.

So, dealing with the text we have here, there are three ideas to note. First, the word *again* could mean "again quoting from the OT" or "when Christ comes again." The English translations are split. The latter interpretation is slightly preferred since the angels will definitely worship Christ at His second advent in glory. Jesus was made a little lower than the angels in his first coming (Heb. 2:7) so it might seem slightly out of place for them to worship Him then (although, they could have, and angels were present giving glory to God in Luke 2:13-14).

Second, the reference to the firstborn does not refer to a chronological event. Christ was not, as a human, the firstborn of humanity. So it has to refer to something else. It refers to rank or special status which would be normally associated with the eldest son. In this case, He is the only Son and has the preeminence. He is firstborn of all believers in terms of receiving the glorified human body.

Third, angels do worship the Son of God, as we can see in Revelation 5:12-13. And they are told to in this text. Any non-fallen angel will show his status as such by worshipping the Son.

## 3. Angels are Servants, v. 7 and 14

Ps 104:4

Verse 7: This verse teaches that angels are spirit beings, that is, that they do not natively have a body. They can appear in bodily form (note two of the three men in Gen. 18:2). The idea of fire in the Bible is one of purity (perhaps emphasized here) and judgment.

The quotation from Psalm 104:4 may throw you for a loop. In most translations, it reads something like this: "the winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants." The word for "wind" is the same as the word for "spirit" and "messengers" is the same as "angels." The KJV and NKJV of Psalm 104:4 have the least confusing translation, that is, they match what the author of Hebrews is clearly saying. In the context of Psalm 104, the other translations reflect an emphasis on natural phenomena (wind, fire), whereas the text can just as well be rendered supernaturally. The psalm begins with God and then His messengers, then the earth, the flood, the animals, etc.

Verse 14: We probably think of angels as higher up on the “food chain” than people. After all, they live in heaven, can travel quickly, bring important messages, do amazing things, etc. However, this verse puts them into their proper assigned place. They are spirits engaged in special service to God. This service has them helping those who will inherit salvation.

The nature of their service is not specified here. Matthew 18:10 gives us some further insight, but the specific meaning is often misunderstood. Many people believe that Jesus teaches about guardian angels. There is no specific guardian angel, however, for the Lord says that “their angels,” referring to them as a group. The angels seeing the face of God does not refer to the departed souls of the little ones. Rather, it seems that the angels seeing the face of the Father means that they are awaiting instructions from Him to go about protecting the little ones from those who despise them. Said the other way around, Jesus warns that anyone who despises God’s children need to watch out because those angels are seeing God’s face. So, don’t despise a believer, lest an angel be sent to protect them, and you are the worse for the wear!

#### **4. The Son Rules Over All, v. 8-9**

**Ps 45:6-7**

Again we should notice here how the Father addresses the Son, in contrast with how He addresses the angels in the previous verse.

The first thought in verse 8 is that the Son is said to have a throne, that is, ruling authority. This throne is established forever. The second idea is that God calls this Son God—so the Son is addressed as God! Third, the Son holds a righteous scepter. This means that he exercises justice for all and there is no wrong in His administration of government. How refreshing it will be to see that operative on the earth!

Fourth, the Son not only exercises justice, but he loves it and He hates wickedness. This is what we need in our people! Too often, they love wickedness and hate righteousness. Fifth, because of this connection with right and opposition to what is wrong, God has anointed the Son more than any other king, placing Him as King of kings.

We should visit Psalm 45:1-7, and particularly note verse 2 where it says that the king is the most handsome of men. Yet the Psalmist calls this one God! He is alluding to the God-man, about a thousand years before He came.

#### **5. The Son is the Creator, v. 10**

**Ps 102:25**

As we saw in 1:2, the Son is the Creator of all things. This is the clear testimony of the Bible, from John 1:1-3 and Col. 1:16, that Jesus is the God-man who long before His incarnation created the heavens and the earth. He is the master craftsman. Bezalel was a master handyman of the tabernacle (Exodus 31:2-5); Solomon was wise and designed many beautiful things; and there are many other humans who have achieved great feats of art, technology, and construction. But there is only one Je-

sus, whose handiwork is the universe, the earth, the animals, the angels, and mankind. He is the creator; everything else is part of creation.

## **6. The Son is Eternal and Immutable, v. 11-12** **Ps 102:26-27**

God is eternal (Exodus 3:14) and immutable (Malachi 3:6). So is the Son. In contrast to the aging and fading earth and universe, the Son of God remains the same and will never have an end.

The world and universe are degrading under the weight of the second law of thermodynamics as entropy increases. Even so, the ultimate reason that the heavens will perish is because God is going to actively do something to dissolve them (see 2 Peter 3:10-12).

Nothing can change the Son of God. He obviously shares the very essence of deity since He is eternal and immutable. Now some might object that He is not immutable since He took on flesh and “changed.” In response, note that immutability has to do with nature, not acts. God is not in a straightjacket in which He can do absolutely nothing. It is His essential nature that cannot change.

## **7. The Son is at the Right Hand of God, v. 13** **Ps 110:1**

Another contrasting statement is given here that shows the Son’s superiority over angels. None of them have received an offer/command like the Son did. The command was to sit at the right hand of God, the place of honor and prominence. His sitting shows His work is done, and that He is awaiting his enemies to be put under his feet.

The world is presently in the strange state of having its King, Jesus, absent for a while (Luke 19:11-27). He has a throne prepared to rule over the world in righteousness (v. 8-9), but He is awaiting the appointed time when He can bring that rule into active expression directly on the earth over His enemies. Christ is presently *waiting*, not *ruling*.

I would not want to be Christ’s enemy. How about **you**?

## **Conclusion**

The cumulative case for Christ’s primacy is indisputable if you take the OT as infallible. We do so here at Fellowship Bible Church, and I do personally. I hope you do as well. I am glad for some help elucidating the OT from the NT authors, and particularly here the book of Hebrews. Some of the connections from OT to NT may seem a bit obscure to you. However, with the benefit of special revelation, the apostles were able to make these connections with infallible certainty and share them with us as the truth about Jesus Christ the Messiah.

The passage teaches us that this Son is a Davidic King, one who receives worship of angels, who is called God, who righteously rules over all, who created the world, and who is eternal and immutable. The orthodox conclusion is that we are speaking about the God-man, Jesus the Christ.

The implication is that we too ought to honor and worship the Son (John 5:23); we ought to acknowledge Him as Lord and God like Thom-

as did (John 20:28; see 1 Cor. 12:3); and we ought to recognize His coming kingdom over His creation. We certainly are not to offer that kind of honor to angels.

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