

## **Jesus: Superior To The Angels**

### **Hebrews 1:4-14**

#### **Introduction**

The Bible teaches that powerful, intelligent, spirit beings exist. They appear to have the ability to interact with our dimension but live in an entirely different dimension.

These beings appear to be both benevolent and malevolent.

The Bible calls them angels.

These powerful, glorious beings served as messengers for God at specific times in the Old Testament.

In Galatians 3:19 Paul answers the question “What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.” In Acts 7:53; “who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it”.

In Deuteronomy 33:2; And he said: “The Lord came from Sinai, And dawned on them from Seir; He shone from Mount Paran, And He came with ten thousands of saints; from His right hand Came a fiery law for them.”

Here “the saints” are spirit beings—angels—who accompanied God at the giving of the law.

Angels played a prominent role in directing and giving the law. Throughout the history of the Jews angels showed up to give messages and render judgment.

In the ancient world many people thought that God was too holy or too busy to bother with people.

It is true that God is holy.

These strange, mysterious and fascinating beings have been the object of much speculation and even worship in ancient cultures.

The veneration and worship of angelic beings continue even now.

Some people feel they are too unworthy to talk directly to God so they make their desires known to spirit beings who they hope will communicate to God on their behalf. They may cry out to angelic beings for protection or secure some temporary spiritual blessing or benefit.

Some people seek interactions and communications with spirit beings who will tell them the truth about God or the after-life. Some people reject the Bible’s testimony about Jesus and want a supernatural experience that does not include repenting of sin or trusting Christ. We live in a world where many people believe there many mediators who can go to God on their behalf.

The writer of Hebrews wants his readers to know that Jesus is superior to angels in every way.

#### **Jesus Is Superior In His Relationship To The Father (vv.4-7)**

*Hebrews 1:4 (NKJV) 4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.*

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Jesus is superior (so much better than the angels). How? By inheritance. Jesus is the heir of all things. Jesus did not change from non existence—to existence—but rather this is a reference to a change of state.

Jesus as the second person of the Trinity has always existed. But the Second Person of the Godhead acquired a new nature, a human nature and as such becomes one person with two natures. Later in Hebrews (2:9) we learn that He was made a little lower than the angels; but is infinitely raised in position according to His redemptive work on the Cross of Calvary.

Jesus has both an inherent superiority; and an acquired superiority. MacDonald points out that the acquitted superiority “results from His resurrection, ascension, and exaltation as Lord and Christ. In incarnation He was made for a little while lower than the angels for the suffering of death (2:9). . . His inherent superiority has to do with his eternal relationship as Son of God. The more excellent name is the name of the Son” (see p. 2159; *Believer’s Bible Commentary*).

Angels are spirit beings created by God to act on God’s behalf.

The writer quotes Psalm 2:7; “I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.”

The book of Psalms is quoted liberally throughout this epistle (in some 16 passages).

*Hebrews 1:5 (NKJV)* For to which of the angels did He ever say: “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You”? And again: “I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son”?

The careful student of the Scriptures suggest that angels are collectively called “bene elohim” or Sons of God. Angels collectively are called Sons of God because they are created by God (Job 1:6). But no single angel bears this title.

In what way is the son “begotten”? We think of the term in the sense of parents giving birth to a child. But here the reference is not to Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem; but rather to Christ’s resurrection from the dead. Colossians 1:18 calls Jesus; “the first-born from the dead.” The second quotation refers to Solomon; in 2 Samuel chapter 7; a reference to the House of David; David wanted to build a house for God; but God decreed that Solomon would build the House; but God promised David that David would be a Father to Solomon; and Hebrews 1:5 applies that promise to Christ; who is “greater than Solomon” (Matt.12:42)”(See Wiersbe’s *Expository Outlines of the New Testament*; p.677).

*6But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: “Let all the angels of God worship Him.”*

The writer quotes Psalm 97:7 or perhaps Deuteronomy 32:43 in the Greek version of the Septuagint. The quote is a reference to the return of Christ to the earth;

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*“Let all be put to shame who serve carved images, Who boast of idols. Worship Him, all you gods (bene-elohim);*

A Dead Sea Scroll fragment adds for Deuteronomy 32:43; “And let all the gods (angels) worship Him”.

The angels worshipped the Lord at His first coming (Luke 2:8-14); and will worship the Lord at His return; and worship the Lord in the eternal state.

Jesus does not worship angels. Angels worship Jesus. Jesus is to be worshipped.

Firstborn can be a reference to first in point of time—or it can be a reference to first in rank or honor (Psalm 89:27). It is used in rank or honor in Romans 8:29; and Colossians 1:15; 18.

*7And of the angels He says: “Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire.”*

The word ‘spirits’ translates the plural form of word (noun) *pneuma*. The word occurs some 385 times in the N.T.; 200 of those times in reference to the Holy Spirit. Only one time is it translated ‘wind’ (John 3:8). Angels are spirit beings! The RSV; NIV and NASB all use *winds*; almost certainly in the poetic sense.

The writer quotes Psalm 104:4; “Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire.”

The Psalm is a praise to the God of creation. It begins; “Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, You are very great; you are clothed with honor and majesty, Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain”.

Jesus is both Creator and Director of the Angels. They obey His will with the speed of the wind and the fervor of fire (MacDonald p.2160).

The angels are spirit beings; created by God—to serve as God’s servants. In one sense Jesus is a servant—but in another sense Jesus is Sovereign. And it is that point the writer will make in the very next verse.

### **Jesus Is Superior In Respect To His Reign (vv.8-12)**

*8But to the Son He says: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.*

Once again the writer quotes the Psalms; this time Psalm 45:6-7;

*Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;*

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*A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.  
You love righteousness and hate wickedness;  
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You  
With the oil of gladness more than Your companions,  
All your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes and cassia.  
Out of ivory palaces, by which they have made You glad.*

The Psalm is a marriage Psalm. The picture in the marriage seems to be Messiah and Israel. God clearly states that Christ has a throne; and the Father calls the Son “God”.

But there are those who deny the Deity of Christ—and must twist the Scripture to say something it does not say. They attempt to translate the verse; “Thy throne is God” with no language or textual support.

*9You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.”*

“...more than Your companions” (*metochos*)-the sharing in or partaking of—it means partners or associates. The term is only used in Luke 5:7 and several times in Hebrews (3:1; 14; 6:4; 12:8). It may refer to angels or human beings who were anointed for an office (like OT prophets; priests and kings). If the oil of gladness is the same as the oil of joy which is referenced in Isaiah 61:3; it makes reference to those who had mourned in Zion—but are now made glad or clothed with praise—and yet Jesus is superior. We are companions of Christ. In what sense? The term refers to all who are participants with Jesus Christ; His ministry; His reign. Jesus obtained the right to rule—by His perfect life—and by His matchless sacrifice on the Cross of Calvary. And so His partners (companions) will rule and reign with Him in that righteous Kingdom.

*10And: “You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands.*

*11They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment;*

*12Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not fail.”*

Jesus is called “Lord”. Jesus is Creator (laid the foundation of the earth); and the heavens are the work of Your hands. Heaven and earth are temporal; Christ is eternal; the universe is subject to decay and dissolution; the universe changes; the Messiah does not change; time cannot make the Lord less or more. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Angels are created beings. Jesus is the Eternal Son. Jesus is the Creator (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1-3).

The same Jesus who created the Universe will one day “like a cloak You will fold them up; And they will be changed.” The same Jesus will one day judge and destroy this universe.

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The writer quotes Psalm 102:25-27.

### **Jesus Is Superior In Regard To His Reward (vv.13-14)**

*13But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"?*

This Psalm has been called the key Psalm (Wiersbe). Psalm 110:1; "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."

No angel ever received such instruction. To sit at the right hand signifies highest honor and limitless power. To become the footstool is the universal sign of subjugation and universal dominion.

In verse 4 we read;     *The Lord has sworn*  
                                  *And will not relent,*  
                                  *You are a priest forever*  
                                  *According to the order of Melchizedek.*

Jesus is the Priest-King according to the order of Melchizedek. The Apostle Peter quotes the same passage in Acts 2:34. The enemies of Christ have not all bowed the knee. But every knee will bow.

The verse is repeated in Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:43 and Acts 2:35.

*14Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*

The writer summarizes the place of angels:

They are ministering spirits; Jesus is the enthroned Son.

Their work is to minister to the Saints.

But to angels also minister to the unconverted—the unbeliever? Are there guardian angels? We know there are evil spirits who wage incessant war against God's elect (Ephesians 6:12). Should it really surprise us that holy angels watch over those who are called to salvation?

But the passage more likely refers to those who inherit salvation (not justification)—that is—those believers who inherit the promised Kingdom! This is for all who honestly and earnestly pray; "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." This is a promise about the future—a future Kingdom where Christ rules and reigns!

But that is not the main point of the passage! The main point is that Jesus is Superior in Every Way.

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What is the role and function of Jesus? He will rule and reign. Jesus must be King and Lord.  
What is the role and function of Angels? They will minister and serve.

**Conclusion**

Jesus is was selected by the Father and is superior to the angels:

Superior in His relationship to the Father as Son (vv.4-7)

Superior in regard to His reign (vv.8-12)

Superior in regard to His reward (vv.13-14).

Jesus has been promised by His Father to make His enemies His footstool.