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Christ is Superior to the Angels
(Part 1)
“Christ’s Superiority to Angels Affirmed”
Hebrews 1:4-14

Introduction:

In his book *Angels*, **Billy Graham** recounts an astonishing story of missionary **John G. Paton** who served in the **New Hebrides**, which is a chain of islands in the **South Pacific Ocean** that now forms the **nation** of **Va-nu-a-tu**. He writes, “On a **dark night** about a hundred years ago, a **Scottish missionary couple** found themselves surrounded by **cannibals’** intent on taking their lives. That terror-filled night they **fell** to their knees and **prayed** that God would **protect** them. Intermittent with their prayers, the missionaries **heard** the cries of the savages and **expected** them to come through the door at any moment.

But as the sun began to rise, to their astonishment they found that the natives had **retreated** into the forest. The couple’s hearts **soared** to God. It was a **day of rejoicing!**

The missionaries **bravely** continued their work. A **year later** the **chieftain** of that tribe was **converted**. As the missionary spoke with him, he remembered the **horror** of that night. He asked the **chieftain** why he and his men had not **killed** them. The **chief** replied, “Who were all those **men** who were with you?” The **missionary** answered, “Why, there were **no men** with us. There were just my wife and myself.” The **chieftain** began to argue with him, saying, “There were **hundreds** of **tall men** in

shining garments with **drawn swords** circling about your house, so we could not attack you.”

What a **marvelous, comforting truth** to know that there are angels who **protect** and **minister** to the people of God! Angels **rescued Lot** and his family out of wicked Sodom. Angels **protected Elisha** and his **servant** from a great Syrian army. Angels were in the **den** with **Daniel** and stopped the lion’s mouths. And yet, as **awesome** and **powerful** as angels are, Jesus Christ is immeasurably **superior** to them. This is what we will be looking at this morning.

As we begin studying **Hebrews 1:4-2:18**, this **long section** on **angels** can be divided into **four sections**. The **first section** that we will discuss is: Christ’s superiority to angels **affirmed** by the Old Testament (vv. 1:4-14). Turn in your Bible to **Hebrews 1**.

In Hebrews 1:4-14 we see *five proofs* of Christ’s superiority to angels in a series of seven quotations from the Old Testament that should deeply encourage every believer’s heart. The *first proof* is this:

I. He has a superior Name

A. Look at **v. 4: having become** as **much better** than the **angels**, as **He** has **inherited** a **more excellent name** than they.

1. Although this verse grammatically **concludes** the preceding verses, it also **introduces** the beginning of what follows. So we look at it here as the author of Hebrews now **transitions** from Christ’s **superiority** to the **prophets** in **vv. 1-3** to Christ **“having become as much better than the angels.”**
2. The Bible says a **great deal** about **angels**. There are **108** direct references to **angels** in the Old Testament and **165** in the New.

3. Angels are **created spirit beings**, made by Christ all at once within the six-day creation (Job 38:7). Although they do not have **flesh** and **bones**, they do have some form of heavenly body. But, when **ministering** on earth they can **appear** in human form (Gen. 18:2; 19:1-2; Mk. 16:5) or in **dazzling, brilliant glory** (Matt. 28:3-4; Lk. 2:9).
4. The **primary purpose** of their creation was to render special **worship** and **service** to God (Ps. 103:20; Isa. 6:1-3; Rev. 4:8; 5:9-12). The word “**angel**,” used **13 times** in Hebrews, means “**messenger**,” designating their essential functions as divine **message-bearers**.
5. They communicated **God’s message** to man. They assisted in bringing the **Law** to **Moses** on Mount Sinai (Ps. 68:17; Acts 7:38; 53; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2). And they revealed the future to **Daniel** and to the **Apostle John** (Dan. 10:10-15; Rev. 17:1; 21:9; 22:16).
6. And ever since a **third** of the angels followed **Lucifer**, now called **Satan**, in his **rebellion** against God (Rev. 12:4), there are **two kinds** of angels: **Good** or **holy angels** and **fallen angels**, which are also called **demons**.
7. But regardless of what **kind** of angels they are, the author of Hebrews says about **Christ** here in v. 4, “**having become** as **much better** than the **angels**.” The one Greek word translated “**having become**” (genomenos), not “**being made**” as in the **KJV**, indicates that it is the **incarnate Christ** that is in view here, for in Christ’s preexistent deity there was **no sense** of Him becoming “**better**,” for He was **perfect**.

8. As we will see later in **2:9**, it was at Christ's **incarnation** that He **became** "for a little while **lower** than the angels," but it was in His **exaltation** when He was **elevated** to the highest place that He became "**much better** than the **angels.**"
 9. The word "**better**" is used in Hebrews **13 times** out of the **19 times** it appears in the New Testament. This term is one that the author uses to **set forth** the **superiority of Christ** over everyone and everything.
 10. And the **first proof** of Christ's superiority to **angels** is seen at the end of **v. 4** "...as He has **inherited** a **more excellent name** than they." The **perfect tense** of the word "**inherited**" indicates Christ's **continuing possession** of this "**more excellent name.**'
- B. We see what this "**name**" is in **v. 5**: For to which of the **angels** did **He** (i.e. God the Father) ever say, "**YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU?**" And again, "**I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME?**"
1. The answer to these rhetorical questions is "**Absolutely none!**" Now the **first quotation** is the messianic **Psalms 2:7**, which **Peter** attributes to **David** in **Acts 4:25-26**.
 2. Even though **angels** are sometimes collectively called "**sons of God**" (Job 1:6; 2:1; Ps. 29:1 89:7), no **individual angel** is ever called "**My Son**" like the Messiah. **Jesus alone** is recognized by God as His **unique Son**.
 3. This is the only Old Testament reference to the **Father/Son** relationship in the **Trinity**, a relationship that was **decreed in eternity past** and **demonstrated** in the **incarnation**.

- Therefore, Christ's "**more excellent name**" than the angels here in this context is the name "**Son**"—"YOU ARE MY SON."
4. Now what is the **significance** of the phrase "**TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU?**" In other words, at what **point of history** is this "**day**" referring to?
 5. Since Paul uses this same quotation in **Acts 13:33** and applies it to the **resurrection** of Christ, it is best **not** to view this as referring to Christ's **incarnation**.
 6. **William Lane** writes, "There is a certain degree of unresolved tension in the writer's designation of Jesus as Son, since the title can be applied to the **pre-existent Son** (v. 3a-b), to the **incarnate Son** (v. 2a), and to the **exalted Son**."
 7. Although Jesus was always the **eternal Son**, and at the proper time became the **incarnate Son**, it was not until His **resurrection**, the **first phase** of Him being the **exalted Son**, that His **sonship** and the Father's **authentication** of it was publicly declared.
 8. We see this in **Romans 1:3-4**, "Concerning **His Son**, who was born of a **descendant of David** according to the flesh, who was **declared the Son of God** with power by the **resurrection** from the dead..."
 9. **Homer Kent, Jr.** accurately observed, "Thus the **exaltation** of Christ by the **Father** when He **raised** Him from the dead and **seated** Him at His right hand was the divine **acknowledgment** that Jesus, in spite of His earthly humiliation, was truly the **unique Son**, with all the **prerogatives** that belong to such a **Son**." (pg. 40)

10. Therefore, although Jesus was previously **acknowledged** as **Son** by the Father at His **baptism** (Matt. 3:17) and His **transfiguration** (Matt. 17:5), the **crowning event** was His **resurrection, ascension** and **enthronement** to the right hand of the Father, each one contributing to the **exaltation** of the Son to heights of power and dignity.

C. The **second quotation** in **v. 5** also comes from the career of **David** when the prophet **Nathan** conveyed God's message to him in **2 Samuel 7:14**. Although David was **denied** the privilege of building the temple, God **promised** that his **dynasty** would be established and said these words regarding David's **seed**: And again, "**I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME?**"

1. Although these words were originally used of **Solomon**, the author of Hebrews under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit applies them to the **Messiah**, Jesus Christ, who was the **greater Son of David** (Jn. 7:42; Rev. 5:5).
2. The **fulfillment** of this promise was **celebrated** in the angel **Gabriel's pronouncement** to the **virgin Mary** about her unborn child in **Luke 1:32-33**, "He will be **great** and will be called the **Son** of the **Most High**; and the Lord God will give **Him** the **throne** of His father **David**; and He will **reign** over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."
3. Therefore, the **point** being made in **both quotations** is that Jesus the Messiah is acknowledged by God as His unique "**Son**." He alone has this **superior name** that reveals a **relationship** to the Father that **no angel** enjoys.

4. The **second proof** of Christ's superiority to angels is this:

II. He has a superior Dignity

- A. Look at v. 6: And **when He again** brings the **firstborn** into the world, He says, AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM.”
1. This is a quote of the **final lines** of the Song of Moses in **Deuteronomy 32:43**, which is actually not in the **Hebrew** text but is in the **Septuagint**, the Greek translation of the Hebrew. Nevertheless, this expresses exactly what the **Holy Spirit** wanted the author to **incorporate** into the inspired text of the epistle of Hebrews concerning Christ.
 2. Now **what is meant** by the statement: And **when He again** brings the **firstborn** into the world? Although there are **various views** on this, it is **best** to see this as referring to God the Father **again** bringing **Jesus Christ** into the world at the **Second Coming**.
 3. The **first time** the Father brought the Son into the world was His **humble incarnation**. But the **second time** he brings Him into the world is in **blazing glory** as **King of kings** and **Lord of lords**, whereby He **takes back** the earth that rightly belongs to Him (Rev. 5:1-5).
 4. Notice how **Jesus Christ** is referred to here as the “**firstborn**.” In **Jewish culture**, the **firstborn son** received a **double portion** of the inheritance and a **special blessing**.
 5. Thus, he had a **higher rank** or **dignity** than his brothers. And yet, in Scripture the **first son** to be **born** was not always the

“**firstborn;**” at times a **younger son** was elevated to the place of **firstborn** (Gen. 48:17-20).

6. In this sense the term meant “the **chief** or **honored one,**” without any thought of **age**. Therefore, it was a **title of honor** that expressed **priority in position, rank and dignity**.
7. As God’s **unique Son**, Jesus Christ has a **superior dignity**. Therefore, when God commands “**LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM,**” He is referring to the **Second Coming** of Christ when His **kingly prerogatives** are fully recognized with **open** angelic worship (Matt. 13:41; 16:27; 25:31; 2 Thess. 1:7).
8. Since the moment of their existence the **holy angels** have always **worshipped** the Son of God. And they did so at His **birth** as the **God-Man** in **Bethlehem**, which we see in **Luke 2:13-14**: And suddenly there appeared with the angel a **multitude** of the **heavenly host** praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”
9. But apparently, during this **present time** the angels do not **understand** God’s redemptive plan **well enough** to give the Son full worship (1 Pet. 1:12). But when He **returns** they will!
10. We see a glimpse of this in the **God-given visions** of **Daniel** (Dan. 7:10) and the **apostle John** who both saw a vast heavenly multitude of **angels** described as “**myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands** saying with a loud voice, “**Worthy** is the **Lamb** that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing” (Rev. 5:11).

11. The **point** of this passage is clear: Christ is **superior** to the angels because He has a **superior dignity**. As **God**, the angels are **commanded** to **worship** Him.

12. The **third proof** of Christ's superiority to angels is this:

III. He has a superior Status

A. Look at **vv. 7-9**: And of the **angels** He says, "**WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS, AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE.**"

But of the **Son** He says, "**YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM. YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS.**"

1. Concerning **angels**, the author quotes **Psalm 104:4** asserting that they are not only God's **created beings**—"MAKES HIS ANGELS", but they are also His **servants**—"HIS MINISTERS."
2. Since He **created** angels and they **belong** to Him, Christ **uses** them as His **instruments** to carry out His will, just as he **uses** the "**winds**" and "**flaming fire**" as His servants of destruction.
3. However, in **stark contrast** to this "**servant**" **status** of **angels**, we see the **status** of the **Son of God** as the **Sovereign God Himself**.

B. Look again at **vv. 8-9**: **But** of the **Son** He says, "**YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM. YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS;**

THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS **ANOINTED** YOU WITH THE **OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS.**”

1. This is a quote of **Psalm 45:6-7**. Here is one of the **clearest**, most **powerful** and **irrefutable proofs** of the **deity of Christ** in the Bible. And notice that it is **God the Father** calling His **Son “GOD!”**
2. In **infinite contrast** to **angels** who are merely **servants**, the **eternal Son** is the **Sovereign messianic King** who has an **eternal throne** in heaven, from which His rule is “FOREVER AND EVER” (Isa 9:6; Jer. 23:5). His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.
3. Christ’s “**righteous scepter**” symbolizes His governing power in operation. And His everlasting kingdom is **characterized** by absolute **justice** and **righteousness** (Ps. 89:14; Isa. 9:7; 11:4).
4. This is because He has “**loved righteousness** and **hated lawlessness.**” The more we **become like Jesus** the more **we too** will **love righteousness** and **hate sin** in our lives and in the world!
5. And because of this, God the Father “**HAS ANOINTED [HIM] WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE [HIS] COMPANIONS.**”
6. It is interesting that the very designation “**Christ,**” which is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word “**Messiah,**” means the “**Anointed One.**” He is the **anointed Prophet, Priest, and King.**
7. Now to have been “**ANOINTED WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS**” refers to the **triumphant exaltation** of Jesus

into heavenly glory after **completing** His earthly mission of the **redemption** of mankind. This was cause of **great gladness** and **rejoicing** in the presence of God.

8. And notice that this was “**ABOVE [HIS] COMPANIONS,**” which refers in not to **angels** since they are merely **servants** not **colleagues**, but to **believers** who will one day **share** His **reign** in the age to come (Heb. 2:10-11).
9. Therefore, Jesus Christ is superior to the angels because while they only have a “**servant**” **status**, His is that of the **Sovereign God**.
10. *The **fourth proof*** of Christ’s superiority to angels is this:

IV. He has a superior Existence

A. Look at **vv. 10-12**: And, “**YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS; THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN; AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD LIKE A GARMENT, AND LIKE A MANTLE YOU WILL ROLL THEM UP; LIKE A GARMENT THEY WILL ALSO BE CHANGED. BUT YOU ARE THE SAME, AND YOUR YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END.**”

1. This long quotation comes from **Psalm 102:25-27** to **demonstrate** that the Lord Jesus Christ **is** the **Creator God** and is **eternal**, which the author of Hebrews has **already asserted** back in **v. 2**.
2. Christ is the **Creator** of the **earth** and the **heavens**. They are **all the works** of His hands.

3. However, **one day** they will all “**perish**” and become like an old worn-out garment that is “**rolled up**” and **thrown away**. **One day** Christ is going to **completely destroy** all that He has created by **fire** (2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 6:14) and create a **totally new heaven** and a **new earth**.
4. However, although this creation will be **changed**, Jesus Christ will “**remain**” forever **changeless**. He is **immutable**, in that, His **character** never changes.
5. **He exists** as **eternally the same**—His “**YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END**.” **No wonder** we read in **Hebrews 13:8**, “Jesus Christ is the **same yesterday and today and forever**.”
6. What an **encouragement** to know that in the midst of living in a fallen, sinful world where our **lives** and **world** are always **changing**, our **security** and **hope** is in **Christ alone!** We need not be **afraid!**
7. The **famous hymn** said it so well: “On **Christ the solid rock** I stand, all **other ground** is **sinking sand**.” Christ is **superior** to angels because **no angel** has such an **eternal** and **unchangeable existence!**
8. *The **fifth proof*** of Christ’s superiority to angels is this:

V. He has a superior Destiny

- A. Look at **v. 13**: But to which of the **angels** has He ever said, “**SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET?**”
 1. Again the **obvious answer** to this rhetorical question is “**Absolutely none!**” This quotation from **Psalm 110:1**, which was already alluded to in **v. 3** and is quoted **14 times** in the New

Testament—more often than any other Psalm, is the **clinching argument** for Christ’s superiority to angels.

2. The most **exalted angels**, such as **Gabriel** who has the **privilege** to “**stand** in the presence of God” (Lk. 1:19), has **never** been **invited** to **sit** in the **place** of **highest honor** and **supreme authority** at the Father’s right hand. Only **God the Son** has been given this **privilege**.
3. In this verse the author shows us the **destiny of Christ**. Notice how the **psalm** depicts the **future reign** of Christ, when He will **reign** over His eternal messianic kingdom and all His **enemies** will finally be subject to Him (1 Cor. 15:24-25, 28).
4. They will be made “A **FOOTSTOOL** FOR [HIS] **FEET**?” The ancient custom of treating one’s enemies as a “**footstool**” is a **metaphor** drawn from the Old Testament **practice** of a **conquering king** putting his **foot** on the **neck** of a prostrated **defeated king** laying on the floor to emphasize his triumph (Josh 10:24).
5. What **encouragement** and **hope** this should give to all believers to know that whatever **injustice** or **persecution** we may be going through there is **coming a day** when Jesus Christ will say “**Enough!**” and He will come and completely triumph over unrighteousness.
6. On that day, we are told in **Philippians 2:10-11** that to the **Son**, “**...EVERY KNEE WILL BOW**, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that **every tongue** will confess that Jesus Christ is **Lord**, to the glory of God the Father.”

- B. But in **stark contrast** to the **destiny of Christ**, we see the **destiny of angels** in v. 14: Are they not all **ministering spirits, sent out** to render **service** for the **sake** of those who will **inherit salvation**?
1. Whereas Jesus' **destiny** is to **reign**; angels' **destiny** is to **serve**.
What a contrast!
 2. Every single angel, "**all**" of them from the **highest** to the **lowest**, are simply "**ministering spirits**" or **servants** "of those who will **inherit salvation**." This refers to who? **Us as Christians** who are the **recipients** of **salvation** by **grace alone** through **faith alone** in **Christ alone**.
 3. Here we see that **angels** are **commissioned** and **continually sent out** by God with the **responsibility** of **aiding** and **assisting** us as believers, who will one day **share** in Christ's rule. What an **encouragement** to know that as the **child of God** Christ has **assigned** his angels to minister to us.
 4. Scripture tells us that they **serve** believers, **assist** God in answering prayer, **proclaim** God's messages, **execute** God's judgment, and often **protect** and **deliver** us from danger. There are times when we may feel like **George Bailey**, who in the Christmas movie classic ***It's a Wonderful Life*** was given the **second-class** angel **Clarence**, but we must remember that angels **minister** to believers only and always in accordance with the **will of God** for our lives.
 5. Therefore, Christ is **superior** to angels because whereas their **destiny** is to **serve**, His **destiny** is to **reign**.

Conclusion:

In closing, the Old Testament itself **affirms** that Jesus Christ is not only **superior** to the **prophets**, but He is also **superior** to the **angels** in every way:

- He has a superior **name**—He alone is God's **Son**.
- He has a superior **dignity**—All the angels **worship** Him.
- He has a superior **status**—He **rules** as the **Sovereign God**.
- He has a superior **existence**—He is the **eternal** and **unchangeable** God.
- He has a superior **destiny**—His **reign** brings all His enemies into submission.

Therefore, may we as His people never **regard** any angel as **greater** than Jesus Christ or ever **demote** the Son of God to the position of a mere angel. Christ is **superior** to the **angels** because **He is God** and He alone is to be **worshipped!**