
The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

Hebrews 1:6

6 And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, “AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM.”

Back in 1988, Laura and I purchased our first computer. We went to a local computer store and for a mere \$2500 obtained a supposedly lightening fast 286 processor with 512KB worth of RAM, a hard drive of 20MB and the basic operating system was not the user friendly Windows programs of today, but simply DOS, which required learning basic computer lingo. On this system I had my most fundamental program, a word processor program called Word Perfect 5.0. For several years I wrote my term papers on this system. About that time Windows 3.1, a much more user-friendly program came out. In addition, Microsoft Word also was becoming the norm for word processing. However, I resisted. I was used to Word Perfect 5.0 on my lightening fast 286 processor. For years I hung on to my use of Word Perfect 5.0. In fact, it was not until I became the youth pastor here at Hope in 1995 that I finally broke down to learn a new word processing program – Microsoft Word.

Today I am much more computer savvy. I own a 3-gigahertz Pentium 4 processor in my laptop, which truly is lightening fast compared to that first 286 processor. I have 512MB of RAM, which is I believe about 1000 times more memory than my first computer; and I have a 60GB hard drive, which is 3000 times larger than my first computer. In every way, the computers and programs I use today are as much superior to anything I had in the past, yet I testify to you today that at one point, I did resist having to move onward and upward. I balked at the idea that something could be better than my humble little Word Perfect program. I am grateful that through the encouragement of others, I saw the light.

As we come again to our letter to the Hebrews, we began looking last week at a particular problem that some of the recipients of this letter were having. Their view of angels as the awesome and pinnacle creations of God had them resisting the idea that Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Man, could somehow match the greatness and power of the angels. In a far more significant way than my desire to hang on to my Word Perfect program, these Hebrews were wanting to hold on to the idea that compared to angels, all paled in comparison, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

So then, the author of this letter launches into a rather lengthy discussion beginning in verse 4 and going all the way through to the end of this first chapter, revealing how the Son, who has been revealed to be prophet, priest and king in verses 1-3, is also vastly superior to any and all the angels of God. Remember

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that our author does this by appealing to that which the first readers would have held as entirely authoritative, the Old Testament Scriptures. An by means of a series of seven Old Testament quotations, the author of Hebrews sets the record straight – yes, angels are awesome, powerful, majestic beings in service to God; however, the Son is no angel and in fact is superior over angels in a multitude of ways.

I told you that we would be seeing four ways in which the author reveals the superiority of the Son over angels. We looked at the first way last week as revealed in verses 4-5, namely that *the Son is superior to the angels by RANK*. For from these verses we learned that no angel has ever been given the individual and affectionate title of Son. Quoting from Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14, we come to learn that there were specific prophecies indicating that Messiah would be brought into this world to be our Redeemer and Savior and that by His deeds and by divine declaration, Messiah would be revealed as the one and only true Son. Thus, **He has inherited a more excellent name than** the angels, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This morning then I submit to you the second of the four ways in which the Son is revealed as superior to the angels.

First, from verse 6, we see that *the Son is superior to the angels by REVERENCE*. Verse 6 says, **And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, “AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM.”** This verse reveals the superiority of the Son in three ways. First, by TITLE; second, in TIME; and third, in TERMS.

TITLE

We begin then by looking at the TITLE the author of Hebrews ascribes to the Son here. He calls the Son **“the firstborn.”** This is a term that has brought some confusion, especially among the cults who like to use this verse to suggest that the Son is a created being and therefore something less than God. To think that this term was given to diminish the Son in a context in which the Son is being exalted is at best naïve. The term **firstborn**, while it could be used in context to refer to one who is born first chronologically speaking, also became a term used to denote primacy, dignity and honor. Again, the context of a passage will determine whether the author’s intent was to show that the person spoken of was born first chronologically or if the point was to show the person’s primacy and supremacy over all others. From my studies of this term, which is used nine times in the New Testament in reference to Jesus, only two clearly and contextually speak of being born first chronologically, the other seven all speak of

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the primacy of Christ. Only in the accounting of Jesus' birth in Matthew 1:25 and Luke 2:7 is this term used to denote being born first –

Luke 2:7

And she [Mary] gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Every other reference reveals Christ as highest in rank, not as the first created (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15; 18; Hebrews 1:6; 11:28; 12:23; Revelation 1:5).

Colossians 1:15; 18

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation...18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

In verse 18, Jesus is called the firstborn from the dead. Yet clearly Jesus is not the first to have been raised from the dead. Just days before His own death, burial and resurrection, we know that Jesus Himself raised Lazarus from the dead. The Scriptures declare that many have been raised from the dead by the power of God. Now, it is true that Jesus' resurrection was different from all others in that He was the first to be raised from the dead never to die again, unlike Lazarus who did eventually die again. But the idea of being firstborn from the dead in Colossians 1:18 has the idea then not that Jesus was the first chronologically to rise from the dead, but that His resurrection was of more importance and was of a greater significance than any other resurrection.

The word translated ***firstborn*** is *prototokos* in the Greek. We get our English word "prototype" from this word. Again, while it can refer to being born first, it was a word that came to primarily denote position or rank. Generally, rather than a word used to indicate time of birth, it was used as a title of great honor or dignity. In Psalm 89:27, we see this idea of TITLE rather than TIME in connection with Messiah. Here we read;

I also shall make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.

† The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

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Clearly the idea here is not in being born first, but of being highest in rank. The Son then is being presented in our text as He who is highest in rank, far above any created being or angel. This is His TITLE. As the Song of Moses proclaimed in Exodus 15:11;

Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders?

TIME

Having seen that the Son possesses the TITLE as the highest of the kings of the earth and majestic in holiness, awesome in praises and working wonders, we come to see also that the Son is superior to the angels in TIME. For our text says, “*And when He again brings the firstborn into the world...*” This is a reference to time and specifically to the second coming of the Son into the world. Notice that our text says, “***when He again brings...***” The idea here is that God will bring the Son to the world a second time. It is interesting to note that there is not mention in Scripture of the angels worshipping the infant Savior. However, at His second coming, the angels of God actively and overtly worship the Son. Let us consider it this way:

First Coming	Second Coming
<p>The angels praised and worshipped the Sender, not the Sent –</p> <p><i>Luke 2:13-14</i></p> <p><i>13 And suddenly there appeared 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 men with whom He is pleased.”</i></p>	<p>The angels praise and worship the Savior –</p> <p><i>Revelation 5:11-13</i></p> <p><i>11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, 12 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.” 13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”</i></p>

† The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

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Angels appear as messengers of hope and salvation –

Luke 2:10-11

10 But the angel said to them, " Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; 11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Angels come with Christ in judgment and glory –

Matthew 13:41

The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,

2 Thessalonians 1:6-8

6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Men sought to drive Jesus out of this world in shame and humiliation via the cross –

Matthew 27:39-43

39 And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads 40 and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." 41 In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, 42 "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him." 43 "HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE Him now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

God will have His Son re-enter the world in majesty, glory and power with His angels –

Matthew 16:27

27 For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.

† The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

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Consider my friends, at the first coming of Jesus the primary object of worship by the angels was upon God the Father for sending the Savior. At the second coming the primary object of worship by the angels will be the Son because of what He accomplished and by divine and prophetic decree for Psalm 97:7, which is the passage from which the author of Hebrews quotes, we read:

Worship Him all you gods (or in the Greek Translation of the Old Testament “angels”).

TERMS

This brings us then to the TERMS that God has laid out for His angels. Again, quoting from Psalm 97:7, God commands ***“Let all the angels of God worship Him.”*** Let us explore this command a bit as it brings forth an interesting question, does it not? The question is, *“Have not the angels always worshipped Christ?”* If Jesus is the Second Person of the Trinity, if He is God, then have not the angels always worshipped Him? If so, then why is it that God now commands the angels to worship Him who they have always worshipped? To begin with, it is true that the angels have always worshipped Jesus, but prior to His incarnation, to His becoming the God-man, the angels worshipped Him only as God. But now the angels have been called upon to worship Him also as the God-man, the Son, who, according to Hebrews 2:9, *“was made for a little while lower than the angels”* but by His rising from the dead has been exalted in His untied character as God and Man, exalted far above any and all created things, even the angels of God.

You see, what the author of Hebrews is seeking to get across to his readers is this, *the angels are but examples to men of how to worship God; not to be objects of worship.* There is no holy angel of God who has or will accept worship. Turn with me to Revelation 22:8-9. Here we read this about angels and worship –

8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. 9 But he said to me, “Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God.”

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

Not only do we notice that the angel refuses to accept worship, but then commands John, with the same word used in our Hebrews 1:6 text, to worship who? To worship God. The angels will only worship God and in Hebrews 1:6 we are told that the angels are command to worship who? To worship the Son. Again we have a clear revelation of the Son being superior to the angels by virtue of the fact that the Son is God.

So then, let us consider what it means to worship the Son. The word worship in the Greek is *proskuneo* (*pros* – meaning “before” and *kuneo* – meaning “to kiss or adore.” The very simple idea of *proskuneo* then is to come before someone with kisses and or adoration. In reference to royalty or Deity, the word came to refer to “a laying out of oneself before another in total servitude, loyalty and devotion.” The readers of this letter would be well aware of this connotation of “worship” and this then would have been a stunning blow to the idea that Jesus is at best equal to if not slightly diminished in the sight of angels. For why would an angel bow himself in complete and total loyalty and devotion to the Son if He were at best an equal? Yet the Old Testament Scriptures make it abundantly clear that all of the angels of God are to worship the Son. The Son is absolutely superior to all the angels of God because all the angels of God must and do worship Him.

By way of application, let us begin with what we have learned. First, there are no angels that would ever dare to receive worship! The angels are commanded to give worship to the One worthy of honor and glory. The application to the first readers was simply that they should not cast their trust upon angels when they will not accept worship nor are they worthy of worship. But like those first readers, we must also consider that all of the heavenly host will join creation in worshipping Jesus Christ as the exalted Lord of all! What does this mean that Jesus is the exalted Lord of all? Such a statement begs some questions on our part.

First, I would ask you to contemplate this question - Do I worship the Son now as my own Lord and God? Think carefully upon this question. Do not think that simply coming to Church or knowing the books of the Bible qualifies as owning Jesus Christ as Lord and God. Many of these first readers of the letter to the Hebrews knew and respected the person of Jesus Christ. They attended the meetings of the Church. They sought to live lives for God as they understood it. But many had diminished Jesus in their lives, making Him nothing more than a good man who left a good example, but being a man, they refused to obey Him as Lord, as Master, as the very Creator and Sustainer of their lives. Remember that the word worship contains the idea of service, devotion and loyalty. Now ask

† The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

yourself this question, *“What do I allow myself to worship; to serve; to devote myself to; to be loyal to; instead of or more frequently than Christ?”*

Do not some of you spend more time watching TV than in prayer and Bible study? Do not some of you long more to be the life of the party than to receive genuine life from the Giver of life? Do not some of you devote long and exhausting hours in and for work, leaving little or nothing for your service to your family and to God and His family? Are not some of you guilty of being more loyal, devoted and committed to serve in a relationship that is not being entirely governed by godly practice and service? Do you not find that your loyalties at times are divided and generally bent more toward this earth than toward heaven? What do you allow yourself to worship; to serve; to devote yourself to; to be loyal to instead of or more frequently than Christ?

An ancient Greek philosopher once said, *“Nothing is easier than self-deceit. For what each man wishes, that he also believes to be true – Demosthenes (Greek Philosopher 384-322 BC).*

Let us heed the words of James 1:14-16 which says,

14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

We can be deceived into thinking our worship of God is acceptable when upon careful examination it is but a contriving of our own minds rather than a true service and devotion to God by His holy Word.

So then, I ask you to contemplate a second question related to the first - Do you take seriously the worship of Jesus Christ? How often do you hear of a person, who after having a serious heart attack and surviving and being told by the doctor that he must change his diet and must get regular exercise is not seen taking such advice seriously? I know there are many who don't, but those who value their lives and their time with their families generally take such direction with all seriousness and sobriety. If you find that your worship of Jesus is deficient or sick, then take seriously the command to worship in spirit and in truth. Do what is necessary to see your behavior changed, your desire to be focused upon knowing God through the Living and Written Word. Begin your serious quest with fervent and continual prayer, crying out with the Psalmist,

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

Psalm 51:10-15

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit (make me willing to obey You).

When such a pray is fervently made, look at the results – worship!

13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You. 14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness. 15 O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise.

Only the Son, Jesus Christ is greater than the angels and He alone is to be revered and worshipped for He alone is worthy of all honor and worship. May it be your prayer to so honor and worship Him each and every day – dare we say each and every moment. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

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