
The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

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

Hebrews 1:7-9

7 And of the angels He says, "WHO 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, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM. 9 YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS."

We have already examined how Christ is superior to the angels in two of four ways. In verses 4-5, we saw that Christ is superior to the angels by rank; meaning that the Son's very name and character place Him in a position that exceeds any angel. Secondly, in verse 6, we saw that Christ is superior to the angels by reverence. Never in Scripture are men or angels commanded to worship other angels. In fact, as we noted, the angels of God will refuse worship and direct man to worship God alone (Revelation 22:9). However, the angels of God are commanded to worship the Son; that is to worship Him as God.

This morning we will look at the third way in which the author of the letter to the Hebrews proves Christ superiority over the angels. From verses 7-9 we learn that Christ is superior to the angels by rule. Let us now look at these verses more closely as see how the rule of Christ reveals His superiority over angels.

To begin with, let us start with an axiom. An axiom is simply a stated or known truth. Our axiom is this, *"the ability to rightly rule is determined by one's character or nature."* Remember that some in the original audience of this letter thought of angels in some regards as being on equal footing with God Himself, comprising an angelic counsel which God must consult with to move forward with His plans. The question is this, "Is it in the angels' nature to rule over the affairs of the universe, this world and over men?" I submit to you that the Word of God emphatically declares, "No!" Hebrews 1:7-9 sets up a stark contrast between the natures of angels and the nature of the Son of God. There is a sense in which the rest of the chapter is devoted to revealing this contrast. This is done in both a general way and then a more specific way.

I. The general way in which Christ is superior to the angels (1:7, 14)

First, the general way in which the nature of the Son is revealed as superior to the nature of angels. This is found for us beginning in verse 7 where we again read, ***"7 And of the angels He says, 'WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS, AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE.'"*** Our author again appeals to and quotes what would be the fourth of seven Old Testament passages to prove his

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

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

point. This quotation is from Psalm 104:4. Psalm 104 should be noted as being a song about creation and it speaks of God's ability or power to ordain, create, and sustain the world. If you notice from Psalm 104, these angels, or messengers and ministers, were created after God established light in the heavens and on the earth. And this leads us then to the first point of our author, namely that **the angels are created**, while **the Son Himself has already been revealed to be the Creator**.

With God speaking, Hebrews 1:7 begins with these words, "Who makes..." The verb "makes" here is a Greek word that you may be becoming familiar with, *poieo*, which means "to make or create." This is the same word that was used in Hebrews 1:2 telling us that the Son is He who "made" or "*poieo*" the world. The point of the author is this, how can those beings that were brought into existence by the word and power of the Son be equal to or greater than the Son who is their Creator? The same One who made the ages, appointing all people and their times, is the one who also "makes" the angels to be. Notice that this verb "makes" is in the present tense. This does not mean that God is in the process of continuing to make angels, but rather that God both brought the angels into existence and then directs their actions, that is God makes them do what they do. Do not miss the point being made, angels are created beings and therefore subordinate to Him who created them. And who created them? The Son, who is God.

The idea of subordination reveals a second difference between the nature of the angels and that of the Son. For in this verse the angels are called both "angels" or messengers, and ministers. The idea is that **angels are only and always the servants of God** while **the Son, is the Sustainer**, the One who **"upholds all things by the word of His power"** (1:3).

Let us not miss the idea that angels are impressive creatures. They are called both "winds" and "a flame of fire." I believe these descriptions reveal some notable truths concerning angels.

First, as "winds" we can be reminded that just as the wind is invisible, angels are generally and usually invisible. The realm of angels is in the heavenly or spiritual realms that God has chosen for men not to normally see. To be sure there will be a time when not only the work of angels, but angels themselves will be much more readily seen. Such a time, as described in part in the book of Revelation, will be one of judgment. But have you ever wondered at the truth that such powerful and glorious creatures as angels, whose number is myriads upon myriads and thousands upon thousands, many of whose purpose is to be *"ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will*

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

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

inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:14) are on the most part invisible? Secondly, as “winds” the angels are powerful. Wind certainly can move across a broad range of degrees. Wind can be a gentle breeze that lightly caresses our flesh with air and sweetly cooling our bodies, or it can be a destructible force that absolutely devastates and levels an area. Such is the nature of angels, who can be forces of gentle care for the sake of believers, but can also be called upon by God to bring about impart judgment upon the earth. By what means did God bring about His final and most devastating plague upon Egypt? Was it not by the “destroyer” an angel sent by God to execute the judgment of God? Angels are powerful creatures who can bring plagues and death. They can also move physical object, such as the stone before the tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:2).

Thirdly, angels, like wind, move rapidly from place to place. They are not omnipresent, that is everywhere present, but Scripture indicates that they can move from place to place quickly.

In the description of “a flame of fire” I would simply point out two thoughts. First, and as already noted, angels are executors of God’s judgment. Generally speaking, fire is a picture of the judgment or wrath of God against sin in the Scriptures. In Genesis 19 we have the account of the two angels who rescued Lot from the judgment they were to deliver to Sodom and Gomorrah. Secondly, the idea of fire may picture their awesome and brilliant appearance. In Matthew 28:2-4 we read,

2 And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. 3 And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4 The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men.

To be sure, we are told some impressive things about the angels of God, but they are still but creatures, created beings and servants, who do nothing more than the will of God. Although angels are the most exalted of all creatures, they are still but subordinates, ministers of the divine will. And it is the Son who made all these angels and made them this way. For the Son alone has the power to create, control and continue angels in their existence.

This is the general reason why the Son is superior to the angels and why the question is asked in Hebrews 1:14, ***“Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?”***

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

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

II. Specific ways in which the Son is superior to the angels (1:8-9)

Having looked at the general way in which Christ is superior to the angels, we now turn attention to some of the specific ways in which our author proves this point. He actually does this all the way through the end of the chapter, but we will limit ourselves to verses 8-9.

These verses are quoted from Psalm 45:6-7. Psalm 45 concerns itself with a Kingly marriage and was probably first written for Solomon, yet, it became known as a Messianic Psalm, that is speaking of the Messiah or Jesus Christ, because there are aspects of this song that cannot or could not be fulfilled by any ordinary or earthly king. As we shall come to see more fully in a moment, verse 6 indicates that the reign of this king is eternal. This is not something that could be said of Solomon's reign. Also, this Psalm tells us that the king loves righteousness and hated wickedness. Yet again, from Solomon's life we see that these things were not always true of him, but they are true of Christ.

From these verses as quoted in Hebrews 1:8-9, we will see three aspects of the nature of the Son that makes Him both superior to the angels, but also then qualifies Him to rule over the cosmos and the affairs of men.

The Son is God (8a)

What is your understanding of what it means to be God? A simple definition of God is that God is "the supreme being." To expand on this idea a bit, we could turn to Webster's dictionary and learn that God is "*any of various created beings conceived of as supernatural, immortal, and having special powers over the lives and affairs of people and the course of nature.*" Apart from the plural "*beings*" in this definition, this is an apt description of the Son and verse 8 begins with this very idea, showing us the Son's nature as Divine, enables Him to rule rather than the angels. Our text reads here, "***But of the Son He says, YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER...***" From this we learn three things:

1. The Son is God by deeds

The first words here are "***Your throne...***" This speaks of the ongoing rule of the Son at the right hand of God the Father. But we cannot forget what we have already learned. The Son is not sitting on the throne in some passive, restful capacity. Rather, by the actions of the Son upon the throne, He "*upholds all things by the word of His power*" (1:2). While upon the throne we are told in Hebrews 7:25 that the Son "*always lives to make intercession for them.*" He is our eternal High Priest and Advocate, functions and positions that only God can

† The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

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

rightly hold. The deeds of Christ while He is upon His throne reveal His superiority over the angels, as no angel can do what He does.

2. The Son is God by declaration

Additionally we read, **“Your throne, O God...”** Who is uttering these words? According to the beginning of these verses, God the Father is saying these things to the Son. So we have the Father calling or declaring that the Son is...God – the supreme being who rules over the lives and affairs of people and the course of nature.

3. The Son is God by duration

Finally, we read, **“Your throne, O God is forever and ever...”** Here we learn that the Son’s nature is superior to the angels in that His dominion, His rule is immortal. The duration of the Son’s reign is for how long? “Forever and ever!” This is the testimony of Scripture. Isaiah 9:7, as a prophecy of the coming of the Son says this -

There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

And in Revelation 11:15 we read;

Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.”

Beloved, may this be an assurance and confidence to your soul. There will be no change of rulership or government with the Son on the throne. Every four years we go through the almost agonizing process of a presidential election. It seems that the opposing sides always think the world will come to an end if the other candidate is elected. To be sure, with a new president comes the endless list of changes. And just about the time we get comfortable with one president, it is time to elect a new one and change again. Not so with the King of kings and Lord of lords. He reigns both now and forevermore. And our prayer ought to be the same as what the Lord Jesus Christ has directed us in Matthew 6:10 –

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

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

Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Is your prayer that the reign of the true King of the universe will be ever increasing spiritually as more and more people come to recognize and serve Him as Lord and Savior and that the full realization of His kingdom would be finally realized upon this earth? May we long for and pray to see the fullness of His reign. You may not realize it now, but the Son does now and will forever reign. Do you know Him as Lord and Savior? Do you know Him as your God?

The Son is Righteous (8b)

The next specific aspect of the Son's nature that is given is found in the phrase, ***“And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom...”*** Now a scepter was simply a rod or staff that served as the symbol of the King's authority, power and rule. The Son's scepter is given a description. It is said to be a “righteous scepter.” The word **“righteous”** here is not the common term that we are familiar with from Paul's writings that refers to legal righteousness (*dikaiois*), but instead, is a word meaning “strictness, discipline or unerring equity.” To have a righteous scepter implies that the bearer of that scepter is righteous Himself. This then is telling us about the Son. Simply put, His rule is right. This means that He does not compromise or bow to political interest groups. The Son is not influenced by bribes or the thought of illegal profits. There is no corruption or scandal in the Son's governing. He does not use “double-talk” to manipulate His kingdom. His purposes are perfect and benefit everyone under His rule. Every promise He makes is sure and can be counted on even in the most trying of circumstances. The rule of the Son is always consistent, and always unaffected by the pressures of time or resources. This is what it means to have a “righteous scepter” – that the scepter is righteous only because the King who wields it is Himself righteous.

This in itself is a marvelous thought, even beyond the idea of a perfect King who benevolently and justly rules His kingdom. For the Word of God predicted that Messiah would both rule in righteousness and be in fact Himself the fullness of righteousness. In Jeremiah 23:5-6 we read this;

5 “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. 6 In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, ‘The LORD our righteousness.’”

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

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

What is His name? The LORD our righteousness. In the Hebrew, Yahweh Tsidkenu. Remember that to the Jews, a name given was to epitomize or describe the actual character or nature of a person. The Son is not simply righteous in what He does, He is Righteousness Himself. And what are the benefits of this Righteous ruler. Again, Jeremiah 23:5-6 reveals that He who is Righteousness, He who bears the righteous scepter will bring all wisdom, all justice and what is right to the people. He will bring both salvation and security to those who dwell in and under His rule by faith. No angel in heaven is either given this task or equipped for such a task.

We may not be looking to angels to fix our own political, social, moral and economic problems; but nor should we ever think that we can look to any government or organization of man to bring about and rule in righteousness. To whom do you look to for justice? By and large we often first and only submit ourselves to men. But the Word of God calls us to gladly and willingly submit to the Son's rule over our lives. 1 Peter 3:15 tells us to **“sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts”** and in Romans 6:13 to **“present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”** Are you living with joy and thanksgiving to be under the “righteous scepter of Jesus Christ the Righteous? If so, then 2 Corinthians 5:9 will be our goal –

Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

The Son is Good (9)

Finally then, from verse 9, we come to see another specific aspect of the Son's nature that makes Him superior to the angels – namely that the Son is good. In very straightforward and simple language, the author, still quoting from Psalm 45, declares, **“You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness...”** In the previous verse we saw that the Son acted in righteousness because He is Righteousness. Here we learn that the Son also loves what is righteous and hates what is lawlessness.

The word for “righteousness” here is the more common work that we often come across in Paul's letter and refers to the simple idea of being right or good. Now we use the word good quite a bit, but what is good? That which is good is that which is beneficial, helpful, honorable and essentially wholesome. To be good is to stand in absolute contrast to that which is evil. Anything evil then would be that which is not beneficial, not helpful, not honorable and not

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

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

essentially wholesome. The Son is said here to have loved righteousness, to have loved that which is good. Notice it is in the past tense. This is because it is referring to the time of the Son's incarnation here on earth, where He manifested perfectly a genuine knowledge of good and evil, of right and wrong. But unlike Adam and Eve, who upon coming to the knowledge of good and evil were unable to resist the evil and unable to do the good, Jesus was able to resist the evil, being our ***“high priest...who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin”*** (Hebrews 4:15) and was able to do only good, declaring to the Father, ***“I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.”***

The lie of the Serpent in the garden was that God withheld information from Adam and Eve by prohibiting them from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. What they did not know was that knowing good, they would be unable to do it and that knowing evil, they would be unable to resist it.

However, the Son, the Second Adam, loved “righteousness.” He loved that which conformed to the standard, which is in keeping with who God is in His holy character. The Son never varied, deviated or erred in keeping God's revealed will. The Son could say with the Psalmist,

Psalm 40:8

I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.

Psalm 119:97

O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.

Not only did the Son love righteousness, but He also hated lawlessness. Lawlessness is everything that is at odds with or contrary to God's will. The Son despised anything that did not completely conform to the revealed standard of God. Isn't this a provoking thought? You see, we are likely to say that we love righteousness, but we might not honestly say we hate lawlessness. Rather, we may be prone to say to heed the calls of lawlessness –

- Lawlessness says, *“God may demand it, but I don't prefer it.”*
- Lawlessness says, *“God my promise it, but I don't want it.”*
- Lawlessness replaces God's will with my contrary desires and I become a Law unto myself.
- Lawlessness is rebellion against the right of God to make laws and to govern His creatures.

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

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

The Son, God in the flesh, hated and continues to hate and abhor such things. It has been said that where there is a true love for God, there will be an abhorrence of sin. This truly describes the Son – does it describe you? You cannot rightly say, “I love righteousness, but I also like sin.” Is it not easy for us to know and do the right thing, that which God commands and yet do it without joy and in unwilling condescension?

But listen, one of the reasons given as to why the Son is superior to the angels is not that the angels don't also love righteousness and hate lawlessness but is because the Son is Righteousness and in Him dwells absolutely no darkness or lawlessness (1 John 1:5).

So our text next declares, **“Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your companions.”** “Therefore” or in other words, because of the Son's nature as God, as Righteousness and as Good, God the Father, who is speaking and once again declares the Son as God, God the Father does something else. He has anointed the Son with the oil of gladness. What does this mean, to anoint? To begin with, we need to remember that the author of this letter is proving the superiority of Christ over angels. No angel has been anointed. The word “anointed” simply means that God has chosen, appointed and exalted this One over all others, including the angels. Only the Son is the Lord's Anointed One. In Psalm 2:2, God the Father specifically refers to His Son as His Anointed. The Hebrew “Messiah” and Greek “Christ” both mean “the Anointed One” and serve as a title for Jesus Christ. God the Father has specifically chosen, appointed and exalted Jesus Christ.

Our text says that God the Father anointed the Son with the oil of gladness. This could be referring to one of two occasions when a King might be anointed. In general, a king is anointed at his inauguration, that is when he becomes king. But I think this might be referring to a different time. The anointing here is in the context of Psalm 45 which is placed in a wedding. The king in Psalm 45 is already in power and is now being anointed at his wedding. So, what seems to be in view here is the festivity and rejoicing over the king and his bride. It is an act of praise and recognition of the king's choice of and work for his bride. In application to the Son, it speaks of God's recognizing and declaring the Son's nature and work as God for His bride as being complete and fulfilled. Being the bridegroom then, the Son is placed above His companions. In other words, no angel has been anointed and no angel has done the work of the Bridegroom to give **“Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that He might present to Himself**

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

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

the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless” (Ephesians 5:25-27).

This is the Son, the Righteous and Good God, in the flesh, anointed, appointed and exalted to a position higher than any creature and alone able to make purification of sins for His people. No angel can compete with the resume of the Son. And the truth of the matter is, since the fall of Satan and his cohorts, no angel will even try to compete with the Son. But man is often fickle, thinking that something of lesser quality or purity can replace and satisfy. Only the Son can and does satisfy the thirst of the human soul. Do not be satisfied with lesser things. Or do you think Jesus speaks to no purpose when He said to the Samaritan woman of John 4:13-14;

“13 Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”

What water are you drinking this morning? What earthly distraction, occupation or pleasure has you fooled into thinking you are happy without the Son being King and Lord of all your life? Why be content with that which only makes you continually thirsty? The Son, whom angels worship and serve, who reigns immortally and eternally on the throne of God, who is Righteousness (He is only right and true) and is absolutely good, calls you to drink of His water that will well up unto eternal life. His water will cause you to love Him, to serve Him, to worship Him. By your attitude toward righteousness and toward sin, you can tell how closely you are to being conformed to Christ. I pray that you will long to live for Him and that He will truly and completely be Lord of your life. Nothing else can so satisfy – so call upon the Son and ask Him to be your all in all.

Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

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