



GRACE

Reformed Baptist Church

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THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Sermon Notes

Hebrews 1:4-9

The Superiority of Christ, Part II

January 25, 2009

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| <p>I. Christ is Superior to Angels as the Unique Son of God [vv. 4-5]</p> <p>II. Christ is Superior to the Angels as the Firstborn [vv. 6-7]</p> <p>III. Christ is Superior to the Angels as the Davidic Messiah-King [vv. 8-9]</p> |
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- Our culture today seems to have an obsession with everything *spiritual*, to include angels. This is clear when one walks into any Christian bookstore. Pictures of angels, books on the subject, and even “guardian angel” pins to wear on one’s shirt are everywhere.
- The reason for this is probably because angels are *amoral*, spiritual beings. We like this because they do not impose any standard upon us. They demand nothing from us.
- One author even writes, “Angels appeal to our ages because they seem to offer us access to heavenly blessings without having to deal directly with heaven’s God himself.”
- Yet, the modern-day obsession with angelic beings is nothing new. The first century Jews were also fascinated with angels. In fact, it appears that the Colossian Christians to whom Paul wrote actually worshipped angels.

Colossians 2:18: “Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on I detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind...”

- Consequently, the author of Hebrews sets out, in his description of Christ’s superiority, to demonstrate how Christ is greater than even angels.
- The reason for the author’s emphasis on Christ’s superiority to the angels is **two-fold**:
 - (1) The Old Covenant delivered at Mount Sinai to Moses was “declared by angels.” That is, it seems that the LORD’s giving of the Law to Moses at Mount Sinai was accompanied by angels. This is also deduced from Deuteronomy 33:2:

“The LORD came from Sinai
And dawned from Seir upon us;
He shone forth from Mount Paran;
He came from the ten thousands of holy ones,
With flaming fire at his right hand.”

- ❑ Even Stephen, speaking before the Sanhedrin in Acts 7:38, states, “...you who received the Law as ordained by angels...”
- ❑ Remember that the first century Jews revered the Old Covenant, and all things associated with it. They revered (even worshipped, to some degree) Moses, the Ark of the Covenant, Mount Sinai, and the Temple. Consequently, since the associated angels with the mediation of the Law to Moses at Mount Sinai (which did have biblical support), they also began to revere, even worship angels.
- ❑ By emphasizing the superiority of Christ to the angels, the author of Hebrews is also emphasizing the superiority of the New Covenant to the (obsolete) Old Covenant. That is, **the Old Covenant was attested by angels, yet Christ is the revelation of the New Covenant.**
- ❑ Richard Phillips comments, “The author’s greater burden is to show the superiority the new covenant to the old, the gospel to the law, that covenant which is mediated by Christ to the covenant mediated by angels. His purpose is to persuade his readers not to fall back from Christianity to the old and now obsolete religion.”
- (2) The second purpose of the author of Hebrews was to demonstrate, as F.F. Bruce writes, “...the new world over which the Son is to reign as Mediator far surpasses the old world in which various nations were assigned to angels for administration (2:5).” Another way of stating this is that **the Messianic Kingdom in which Christ reigns as King far surpasses any previous administration or kingdom the Jews had ever known or would know.**

<p>❖ Yet, this passage in Hebrews, once again, demonstrates that fallen man will worship anything that is spiritual or associated with God; however, we, in our fallen nature will never worship the One true God Himself. We will worship anything that is lesser than God in perfection; however, we refuse to worship God, who alone is perfect and righteous. We will worship all things that are not even worthy of worship, but not the Only God who is the only one who is worthy of our praise.</p>

I. Christ is Superior to the Angels as the Unique Son of God.

⁴having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. ⁵For to which of the angels did He ever say,

"YOU ARE MY SON,
TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU"?

- The author of Hebrews continues his argument regarding the superiority of Christ to the angels by stating that the reason for this is because “He [Christ] has inherited a more excellent name than they...”
 - This statement, however, raises several questions.

○ First of all, “What is the *name* of Christ that the author refers to?”

- Given the context of the passage, it seems rather clear that the name that is “more excellent than the angels is “**Son of God.**”
- Throughout the life of Christ, our Lord is referred to as the Son of God through a heavenly affirmation.
- For example, in Luke 1:32, the angel Gabriel announces to Mary that she will give birth to a son, saying, “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.”
- Also, at the baptism of Jesus Christ, a voice from heaven declares, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17)
- Further, at His Transfiguration, God’s voice declared, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 17:5)
- Given these accounts, some commentators believe that Jesus Christ did not become the **Son of God** until His birth/incarnation.
- However, **Jesus Christ has existed eternally as the Son of God.** There was never a point when He *became* the Son.

❖ In his classic work, *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer writes, “[the] God-man (Jesus Christ) to the Father while He was on earth was not a new relationship between the Son and the Father in heaven. As in heaven, so on earth.” (pp. 55-56)

- Yet, the second question raised by this passage is, “When was it that Christ *inherited* the most excellent name?”

- The author further explains this by quoting from **Psalm 2:7**:

**⁵For to which of the angels did He ever say,
"YOU ARE MY SON,
TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU"?**

- Further, Paul also quotes from this Psalm in Acts 13:32-33:

Acts 13:32-33: “And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm,
’You are my Son,
today I have begotten you.’”

- Clearly, Paul appropriates Psalm 2:7 to the **resurrection of Jesus Christ**.
- Further, Richard Phillips commenting on Acts 13, writes, “This refers to Christ’s resurrection, and the idea of begetting here is that of declaring or manifesting to the full.”
- The Apostle Paul echoes this truth in Romans 1:3-4, stating, “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, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,”
- In other words, Jesus Christ was the son of David in his humanity, and the Son of God in His divine nature.
- Phillips again states, “...when God raised our Lord Jesus from the dead, having been crucified for our sins, God the Father brought him into his inheritance, manifesting before all the world his status as divine Son.”

- **Thus, because of Christ’s righteous obedience to the Father’s will, the Father exalted Christ (through the resurrection and ascension) to the highest name and gave Him the name that is above every name.**

- The resurrection and ascension, therefore, demonstrates God the Father’s approval of Christ and His work.

James Montgomery Boice writes, “The resurrection of Jesus Christ establishes the doctrine of our Lord’s deity. When he lived upon earth Jesus claimed to be equal with God and that God would raise him from the dead three days after his execution by the Jewish and Roman authorities... The resurrection is God’s seal on Christ’s claim to divinity. Jesus was ‘designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.’”

Romans 1:4

“...yet he was declared to be the Son of God, and it was made manifest, that this name of right belonged to him, upon the discharge of his office, at his resurrection and ascension to heaven; and therefore he is said to obtain it by inheritance; or he appeared to inherit it of right, and that it was his possession for evermore.”
John Gill

- Furthermore, the author’s rhetorical question, beginning, in Verse 5 with, “For to which of the angels did God ever say...” emphasis a clear point. That is, the Father refers to **no one** other than Christ as His *begotten Son*.
- Now, it was not uncommon in the Old Testament to refer to angels as “sons of God” (Genesis 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). Yet, again, none of them were referred to as *the* Son of God.

Lastly, we as God’s people, are also referred to in Scripture as “sons of God”; yet, this is only by adoption. **However, only Jesus Christ is the eternal, monogenes unique Son of God by nature.**

- Therefore, Jesus Christ has **always** been the Son of God; yet, it was His exaltation by the Father through the resurrection, ascension, and subsequent enthronement that the author is speaking of here.

“In view of the emphasis laid throughout the epistle on the occasion of Christ’s exaltation and enthronement, it is probable that he thought of this occasion as the day when he was vested with his royal dignity as Son of God.”
F.F. Bruce

II. Christ is Superior to the Angels as the Firstborn

“And again,
**‘I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM
AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME’?**

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

⁷And of the angels He says,
**‘WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS,
AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE.’”**

- This second quote, in Verse 5, is from 2 Samuel 7:14: “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.”
 - In the original Old Testament context, the prophet Nathan was speaking to King David regarding his desire to build a house (Temple) for the LORD.

- Furthermore, in the original context, the LORD, through the prophet Nathan, establishes the Davidic Covenant, stating in Verse 13, “**He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.**”
- As with Old Testament prophecy, there was a *double fulfillment* of the promise. That is, it was fulfilled partially, in the near term, with the birth and life of Solomon, the son of David, who built the Temple of the LORD.
- However, it was fulfilled finally and perfectly in Christ who was, Himself, the very One to whom the Temple pointed, and was, and is, the eternal Son of God. ***It is certainly Christ, not Solomon, whose kingdom is forever.***
- Furthermore, it is only Christ that can rightfully, by nature, refer to God as Father.
 - John Owen notes that this passage, in both 2 Samuel 7:14 and Hebrews 1:5, reflects “the paternal care of God over Christ in his kingdom, and the dearness of Christ himself unto him.”
- Next, the author writes, “**And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, ‘AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM.’**” quoting from either **Psalm 97:7** or **Deuteronomy 32:43**.
 - The author of Hebrews opens this quote from the Old Testament by referring to the *firstborn*.
 - This is possibly a reference to Psalm 89:27: “I will make him the firstborn, / The highest of the kings of the earth.”
 - In fact, the very reason why all the angels are to worship Him is ***because He is the firstborn.***
 - In the Ancient Near East, the concept of ***firstborn*** (*prototokos*) does not necessarily mean the firstborn, chronologically. In other words, it does not necessarily mean the first-created.
 - John MacArthur writes, “The first son to be born was not always the ‘firstborn.’ Esau, for instance, was older than Jacob, but Jacob was the first-born, the *prototokos*.”
 - Genesis 49:3 gives a powerful description of the firstborn, the *prototokos*: “Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the *firstfruits* of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.”
 - That is, the *firstborn* is “preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.” The firstborn has the power and the right to rule.

- Furthermore, the concept of *firstborn* refers to “preeminence in family lineage and rights of inheritance.”
 - **Yet, Christ is the *firstborn* over all creation; the *firstborn* from the dead (through His resurrection); the *firstborn* among many brethren (Romans 8:29). That is, He has preeminence over all of them.**
 - Paul uses the concept of *firstborn* with respect to Christ as well in Colossians 1:15, 18 and Romans 8:29.
 - F.F. Bruce writes, “He is called firstborn because he exists before all creation and because all creation is his heritage.”
- Now, because Christ is the *firstborn* of all creation, the Hebrews author writes, “AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM.” (quote from Psalm 97:7 and Deuteronomy 32:43).
 - F.F. Bruce writes:

“There is a rabbinic tradition to the effect that when Adam (who in one sense was God’s ‘firstborn’) was created (or ‘introduced into the world’), god invited the angels to worship him, but at Satan’s instigation they refused. According the *The Life of Adam and Eve*, ‘God the Lord spoke: ‘Here is Adam. I have made him in our image and likeness.’ And Michael went out and called all the angels, saying: ‘Worship the image of God as the Lord God has commanded.’ And Michael himself worshipped first.” Here, however, (in Hebrews) it is not the first Adam but the last who is the object of angelic homage; our author was possibly acquainted with an interpretation of the words he quotes which represented angels as called upon to pay allegiance to the heavenly Son of Man at the time of his public manifestation.”

- Next, in Verse 7, the author quotes from Psalm 104:4, stating, “And of the angels he says, **‘WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS, / AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE.’**”
- Thus, as F.F. Bruce states, “Angels are portrayed as executing the divine commands with the swiftness of wind and the strength of fire.”
- The idea here is that angels are magnificent creatures. Their glory far exceeds that of men. In fact, everywhere we see in Scripture that angels and men meet, the men are gripped with great fear.
- Yet, despite the great glory of angels, they are still *creatures*. As such, they are subject to the One who is not only the *firstborn of all Creation*, but is the agent of Creation Himself: Jesus Christ!
- And this is why the Hebrews author states, “AND LET ALL OF THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM.”

- Consider **Revelation 19:10**: “Then I fell down at his feet to worship him (an angel), but he said to me, ‘You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.’”

III. Christ is Superior to the Angels as the Davidic Messiah-King [vv. 8-9]

⁸But 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."**

- Finally, the author of Hebrews quotes from **Psalm 45:6-7**, highlighting the enthronement and rule of the Davidic Messiah-king.
 - This concept of an eternal sovereign exists in passages such as Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7.
 - Also, this theme appears quite clearly in Isaiah’s famous passage in Isaiah 9:6-8:

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.

- Also, the angel Gabriel, speaking to Mary in Luke 1:32-33 stated (speaking of Jesus Christ), “He will be great and will be called the son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”
- The Psalm quoted here in Hebrews 1, Psalm 45, is a royal marriage Psalm, a love song.
- In it, the bride (which is fulfilled in the people of God, the Church) remarks at the beauty and splendor of the groom. Yet, the climax of the Psalm is **Verse 6**: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.”

- Any scribe, rabbi, or Hebrew layman living in the Old Testament times would have known that no king could ever truly live up to this Psalm, for no king's throne would last forever.
 - Thus, only Christ can fulfill this Psalm. Only Christ's rule is eternal. Only Christ is the eternal King of Kings!
- However, of all the truths of this Psalm, the clearest, and most powerful is the address of the King as “**O God...**”
- Clearly, the King is God here, revealing the deity of Jesus Christ.
 - Not only this, but the rule of the Davidic King is a *righteous rule*.
 - It is this King – the King of Kings – who is the anointed One, the Davidic Messiah, and the One who is “anointed...with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”

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- Therefore, we know that Jesus Christ alone is worthy of all of our worship, for He (and He alone) is the unique Son of God, firstborn of all Creation, and the Sovereign King of Kings!
- Yet, consider the final phrase in Verse 9, “...therefore God, your god, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”
- We, as those for whom Christ died, are numbered among the companions of whom God refers to here.
 - For the righteousness of Christ is ours, and we are fellow heirs with Him, for He is our elder-born brother, and the firstfruits of a new race in his bodily resurrection from the dead!
 - Consider, now, just from this first chapter of Hebrews, the identity of Jesus Christ:
 - He is the final revelation of God the Father;
 - He is the heir of all things;
 - He is the agent of Creation;
 - He is the radiance of the glory of God the Father;
 - He is the exact imprint of the nature of God the Father (He is fully God);
 - He sustains all of Creation by His word;
 - He made purification for our sins;
 - He is seated enthroned at the right hand of God the Father;
 - He is the eternal Son of God;

- He is the firstborn of all Creation;
 - He is the One the glorious company of angels worship;
 - He is God;
 - He is the Davidic Messiah King;
 - He will rule forever!
- May Christ alone be praised and exalted!

1 Timothy 1:15-17: “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”