

Better than Angels
Hebrews 1:4-14
Reading: **Psalm 97**

Bethany Baptist Church
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...pray...

Your Bible makes almost **275** references to *angels*: ~ **108** OT & **165** NT.

In both *Hebrew* & *Greek* the word translated *angel* means *messenger*.

God created angels & God created humanity, although He *probably* made *all* the angels, *all at once*.

As their name implies (*messenger*) God made angels to *serve*. Kent Hughes identifies **four** basic angelic jobs:

To worship God.

To communicate God's messages to men.

To minister to believers.

To help carry out God's judgment

Angels come in different *shapes* & *sizes*.

When an angel appears, the most common human response is *fear*!

And perhaps even a temptation to *worship*... But that's a *mistake*!

Men & *angels* are **two** different creatures, but *you* & *me* & *Gabriel* have *this* in common: we were made to *worship*...to worship *God*!

Let's open our NT to Heb 1:3-14. [*When He had made purification of sins...*

Better is one of the **two** big ideas in Hebrews: *better* ... & *warning*!

The word **better** shows up for the *first* time in **v.4**:

Jesus is *better than the angels*...

So *worship* Jesus, and **not** anything else...*not even the angels*.

The **NT** *Book of Hebrews* continues its case that Jesus is *better*, by pulling together 7 **OT** texts, **6** of which are taken from the *Psalms*.

These verses argue that Jesus is better!

Jesus is better than the *angels*: Jesus is *better* because of...

1. **Name** (vv.4-5). Who is *God's Son*? *
2. **Worship** (vv.6). Who *worships* who? *
3. **Nature** (vv.7-9). Who rules in *righteousness*?
4. **History** (vv.10-12). Who is *eternal & immutable*?
5. **Posture** (vv.13-14). Who *stands* & who *sits*?

*- We'll cover these first two points this morning.

Jesus is *better* than the angels because God has given Him a *better name*.

1. This morning we stood & sang: *All hail the power of Jesus' name, let angels prostrate fall!*
2. And this *first* claim is that Jesus' *powerful, better name* is "Son of God."
 - a. The concept of your *name* was much more intense in **1st** century Jewish culture than in our **21st** century western culture. Your *name* said a lot about your *background* and your *place in society*. So an appeal to Jesus' *name* made a lot of sense.
 - b. Now, if you are a *careful Bible reader* you might recall that Scripture sometimes applies the idea of "sons" (pl) in a broad sense to *all angels* and *all Christians*...
 - c. But the very important point here, in fact the *leading* idea, is that the *only individual* to ever bear the name "Son of God" is *Jesus Christ*.
3. This *first reason* is immediately backed-up by **two** crucial verses every *Jew* would know & everyone with a *Jewish heritage* would associate with the *Messiah*.
 - a. Including, of course, the people who first read our text!
 - b. **Psa2:7**– is a king's *coronation* hymn (*enthronement psalm*, **cf v.3b**) ...
 - c. Everyone knew that **Psa 2** was a reference to the enthronement of the *Greater David*, God's promised *Messiah*.
 - d. Our *second OT* text is **2 Sam 7:14** – this vs. is straight out of the *Davidic Covenant*, in which God promised King David a *Son* to sit on the *royal throne* forever!
 - e. In both of these *royal references*, the big idea is that *God's Messiah* is enthroned as "**God's Son**," a name that no man or angel in all *creation & eternity* can lay claim to!

4. Jesus great name as *Son of God* is bound to His *enthronement* & His *resurrection* & His *incarnation*.
 - a. That's what we've just examined as Jesus is *enthroned* (3b) & then is *named* (4b)...
 - b. Underlined by the **two** *enthronement* declarations (5) lifted from **OT**.
5. Jesus' **name** as *Son of God* is also declared by His *resurrection*.
 - a. Turn w/ me to **Rom 1:1-4**.
 - b. **V.3** – The Gospel is all about *Jesus*, who is *King David's descendent* and *God's Son*.
 - c. **V.4** – The historic event here in **Rm1** that *seals the deal* concerning *Jesus' name* as *God's Son* is His **resurrection** on the **3rd** day.
 - d. (And of course, God's Gospel is framed-up on Jesus' **crucifixion** in the place of sinners, His **burial**, & His *death-defeating, name-declaring resurrection*.)
6. Jesus' **name** as *Son of God* is riveted to His *incarnation* – Jesus is *truly man* & *truly God* – God's *Son*.
 - a. Young **Mary** heard it announced from the lips of...an *angel* in **Lk 2:31,32** – “*And behold, you will conceive in your womb & bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 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.*”
 - b. We see it in **John 3:16** - *quote*.

7. **“Son of God”** is a name never granted any *man* or *angel*:

- a. *Not Gabriel or Michael...*
- b. *Not seraphim or cherubim or arch-angel...*
- c. *Not the angels of Isaiah 6 or Ezekiel 1 or Revelation...*
- d. *Not the angels who guarded the way back to the Garden...*
 - i. *Went up & down Jacob’s ladder...*
 - ii. *Spoke to Daniel & Zacharias & Joseph & Mary & the shepherds & the exiled Apostle John...*
 - iii. *Not even the angel who strengthened our Lord in Gethsemane.*

Only Jesus is God’s only begotten Son. The Son of God has the better name!

How to address the “eternal Sonship” issue. John 17; these verses; readers’ understanding

Jesus is *better* than the angels because the angels *worship* Him.

1. The **second** *argument* for Jesus as ***better*** than the angles is this quote from **Psa 97: read v.6.**
2. This **OT** verse is introduced by an important expression: *And again when He brings the firstborn into the world, He says:*
 - a. In **v.5** God was speaking to His *Son*, here (6) He commands the *angels*. (So the first **2** pronouns *He* are in reference to God.)
 - b. Our English translations use the term “*world*,” which misses the exact sense of the original word.
 - i. *World* here is a more specific term than simply the *globe* – it focuses on the *earth as inhabited by humankind*.
 - ii. Jesus is the *firstborn* among all *humankind*.
 - c. But the important word here is “***firstborn***.” Jesus is referred to as “*firstborn*” **6x** in the **NT**. The idea isn’t *birth-order* but *importance*. It’s not *time* but *priority*.
 - i. The **NT** is ***not*** teaching that Jesus is the *first created man*. We know that the **NT** asserts that God *took on flesh & lived among us: truly God & truly man* (→ *Doctrine of the Incarnation*).
 - ii. Rather, Scripture is reminding us that Jesus is *more important & above* any man (or *any* created thing).
 - iii. And therefore, He has the right to *rule* over everyone & the right to be *worshiped* by everyone – *even the angels!*
 - iv. That’s the second proof that Jesus is *better* the angels, God *commands* them to *worship* Him.

d. The Bible is full of examples of *worshiping angels*:

i. In the **OT**, the prophet **Isaiah** was overwhelmed by the vision of angels. known as *seraphim*, worshiping YHWH in Jerusalem's temple (Isa 6):

1. *In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty & exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. ² Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called out to another and said, "**Holy, Holy, Holy**, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." ⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.*

ii. **FF 8** centuries into your **NT** as we go *out* of Jerusalem's temple and *into* the Judean countryside as the nighttime skies *erupt* w/ the music of a heavenly *choir* of worshiping *angels* (Lk 2):

1. *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"*

iii. At this point you might conclude that worshiping *angels* worship *God alone* – and you'd be right!

1. A holy angel *won't worship* anyone but God & *won't allow* anyone to worship himself, a *mere angel*. (Apostle John → *Revelation*)

iv. Then in **Rev 5** we witness (we *hear!*) this scene in heaven's throne room:

1. *“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power & riches & wisdom & might & honor & glory & blessing.”*
2. And this: *“To Him who sits on the throne , and to the Lamb, be blessing & honor & glory & dominion forever & ever.” And the four living creatures (angels) kept saying, “Amen.” And elders (the angels of the churches) fell down & **worshipped!***
3. Jesus is *“firstborn” - more important than anything else, and worthy to rule over everything. And He always has been!*
 - a. In fact, this **second** *argument* points us again straight to Jesus' *deity!*
 - b. ...as God commands the *angels* to worship His Son.

The angels worship Jesus because Jesus is better than the angels.

The only *Son of God* is worthy of worship!

That *sums up* this passage's first **two** reasons that Jesus is *better than the angels*.

We'll continue to *unroll* the rest of that list next Sunday (Lord willing)...

But is a comparison of *Jesus* to *angels* still relevant in the **21st** century?

Yes...and here's *why*:

In the **1st** century, *so-called Christians* wanted to *distance* themselves from Jesus but still *comfort* themselves w/ some kind of *spiritual experience* – like *angel worship*.

...we are **still** looking for ways to be *spiritual w/o* being *religious...i.e. biblical*.

We want to tell ourselves that we can have a **connection** to God, **w/o** being **accountable** to the *claims & commands* of Christ: “*no one comes to the Father but by Me*” & “*love your neighbor*” & “*You shall be holy as I am holy.*”

So we look for some form of *spirituality w/o* any *responsibilities & “penalties”!*

But friend, no matter what “*I’m spiritual but not religious*” recipe you cook up: whether it's *New Age angel worship* or some *home-brew eastern mysticism*, ...

It **won't** provide what only Jesus has **already** provided: a *payment* for your sins & a *clear conscience* & the *guarantee* of spiritual new life.

The *new life* comes by *faith*:

By trusting that Jesus is *better* because He is *God's Son* & He has made *payment* for your sins & He was *raised* from the dead!

He is *better* – I urge you to *trust* Him today!

...*pray*...