

THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST OVER ANGELS

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“The spirit creature called Michael is not mentioned often in the Bible. However, when he is referred to, he is in action. In the book of Daniel, Michael is battling wicked angels; in the letter of Jude, he is disputing with Satan; and in Revelation, he is waging war with the Devil and his demons. By defending Jehovah’s rulership and fighting God’s enemies, Michael lives up to the meaning of his name—“Who Is Like God?” But who is Michael?

At times, individuals are known by more than one name. For example, the patriarch Jacob is also known as Israel, and the apostle Peter, as Simon. (Genesis 49:1, 2; Matthew 10:2) Likewise, the Bible indicates that Michael is another name for Jesus Christ, before and after his life on earth.”

The above except is from an article by Jehovah’s Witnesses (a Christian cult) on “Who is Michael the Archangel?”

- ❖ **Hebrews 1:1-3**, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...”

What you think about Christ is crucial to your salvation and sanctification.

Christology is one of the most complex doctrines. Some either deny “Christ’s humanity” and others “Christ’s deity”.

1. THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST OVER ANGELS IN “NAME”

At the beginning of the letter, the author of Hebrews showed how Christ is superior to the Old Testament prophets. And now he proves how Christ is superior to the angels.

A key rhetorical question, “For to which of the angels did God ever say?”

Why was the author of Hebrews proving Christ’s superiority over angels?

Kent Hughes, “Because some of the Jewish believers to whom he was writing were in danger of compromising Jesus’ superiority and lapsing into Judaism. They were under pressure first from the imminent threat of Nero’s persecution for being Christians, and secondly, they were pressured because of ostracism by their Jewish countrymen in the synagogue. They were being tempted to compromise. If they would simply agree that Jesus was an angel, perhaps even the greatest of angels, but not God, they would be accepted into the synagogue and escape the awful pressure. Such a prospect was tantalizing

because it did not require an outright denial of Christ, but only a different affirmation of him and his greatness as an angel.”

- ❖ **Hebrews 1:4**, “having become as much superior to angels as **the name** he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.”

For the Hebrews, the name signified “the essential character of a person in himself and in his work” (P. Hughes, p. 50).

Observe: Chain of seven Old Testament quotations (five from Psalms, one from 2 Samuel, and one from Deuteronomy)

Messianic Psalms and Prophecies:

- ▶ Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament deal with some aspect of the Messiah’s nature, ministry, or associations.
- ▶ Many times, these prophecies have dual application, pointing both to the historical context of the original author/audience and also the future fulfillment in Christ. The authors of the OT might not have a long-range understanding of these prophecies.
 - **Example:** Psalm 22 (begins with My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me) portrays both the anguish of David and the future fulfillment in Christ.

What is the name that Christ inherited which is more excellent than the angels?

Hebrews 1:5,

For to which of the angels did God ever say,
“You are my **Son**, today I have begotten you”?

Or again [For to which of the angels did God ever say],
“I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a **son**”?

The Hebrew word for angel is malak and the Greek angelos. Both mean “messenger,” designating their essential functions as divine message-bearers.

- ▶ Genesis creation omits the creation of angels. Perhaps angels were created before the creation of the world. Psalm **148:2**, “Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts!” ... **148:5**, “Let them praise the name of the LORD! For he commanded and they were created.”
- ▶ Angels are mentioned over one hundred times in the Old Testament and more than 160 times in the New Testament.
- ▶ Angels are sometimes called “sons of God” (**Job 1:6**—the sons of God presented themselves before the Lord). Though they are spirits, they are always described in masculine terms.

- ▶ But no angel was called “the son of God”.
- ▶ Only Jesus is called “the Son of God”. It speaks about the **uniqueness of Christ** [the exact imprint of God the Father] and **the unique relationship He shared with the Father**. Angels are not entitled to this privilege.

Scripture 1: Hebrews 1:5a, For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? (**Heb. 1:5**; citing Messianic **Psalm 2:7**)

Clarification of the Messianic Promise, Psalm 2:8, “Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.” This Scripture is not for all.

Kent Hughes: The phrase, “today I have begotten you” evidently refers to Christ’s exaltation and enthronement as Son subsequent to the resurrection.

The word “**begotten**” (“gennaō”, used only four times in NT, different from “monogenēs” in John 3:16) means “**brought forth**”. Today I have brought you forth (from the grave), referring to Christ’s resurrection and exaltation.

- ❖ **Romans 1:3-4**, “concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was **declared to be the Son of God** in power according to the Spirit of holiness **by his resurrection from the dead**, Jesus Christ our Lord...”
- ❖ **Acts 13:30-33**, “But **God raised him from the dead**, and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. 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.”

Scripture 2: Hebrews 1:5b, For to which of the angels did God ever say, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”? (citing Messianic **2 Samuel 7:14a**)

Context: Nathan’s prophetic promise to David that his house would reign forever.

Immediate application: Solomon. **Future application:** Messiah.

Clarification: 2 Samuel 7:14b, “When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men...” [Not everything is related to Messiah]

- ❖ **Jeremiah 33:17**, “For thus says the Lord: David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel...”
- ❖ **Jeremiah 23:5**, “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.”

For this reason,

- ❖ **John 7:40-43**, When they heard these words [Christ speaking about living water flowing from the one who believes in Him], some of the people said, “This really is the Prophet.” Others said, “This is the Christ.” But some said, “Is the Christ to come from Galilee? **Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?**” So there was a division among the people over him.
- ❖ When Jesus performed great miracles, “And all the people were amazed, and said, “Can this be the Son of David?” (**Matt. 12:23**)
- ❖ Bartimaeus, the blind man, cried out, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” (**Mark 10:48**).

Jesus said to the Pharisees in **Matthew 22:41-46**,

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” He said to them, “How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying,

“The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet”?”

If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?” And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

2. THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST OVER ANGELS IN WORSHIP

Scripture 3: Hebrews 1:6, And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “**Let all God's angels worship him.**”

Firstborn does not necessarily mean **birth order**. It also speaks about **being supreme in position**. The following Scriptures are the evidence.

- **Exodus 4:22-23**, Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord, **Israel is my firstborn son (figurative)**, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your **firstborn son (literal)**.
- **Jeremiah 31:9**, “I am a father to Israel, and **Ephraim is my firstborn.**” Actually, Manasseh was the firstborn son of Joseph and Ephraim was the youngest.
- **Psalms 89:27**, “And I will make him [David] **the firstborn**, the highest of the kings of the earth.” Actually, Eliab was the firstborn son of Jesse and David was the youngest.
- **Romans 8:29**, “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that **he might be the firstborn** among many brothers.”

In this verse, it is non-sense to think “firstborn” as “first created being”. It could only mean “pre-eminence”.

- Lightfoot mentions the ancient Rabbis called Yahweh Himself "Firstborn of the World."

“And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world (inhabited earth with people)”—Some scholars believe it is first coming (Luke 2:13-14, majority) and other scholars believe it is second coming (Rev. 5:11-12).

Main point, “Let all God's angels worship him.” (citing Psalm 97:7; Deut. 32:43)

Donald Hagner (Bible commentator and professor of NT): In the Deuteronomy text, the pronoun “him” in the quotation **refers to the Lord** (YHWH—the Tetragrammaton, the personal name of God, “Yahweh”), and **by applying these words to the Son, the author in effect affirms the deity of the Son.** If the angels are called to worship God, so also are they called to worship the Son, whom God has now sent into the world and through whom he has spoken definitively.

Revelation 22:8-9, I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. **Worship God.**”

Psalm 148:2, “Praise Him [God], all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts!”

Steven Cole: If “firstborn” meant what the Jehovah’s Witnesses say it means, that Jesus was the first one created, then why would God command the angels to worship Jesus? To worship anyone less than God Himself would be blasphemy. Surely God would not command such a thing!

Application: If angels are commanded to worship Christ, shouldn’t we worship Him? We must worship Christ personally, as a family, and as a church. We must worship Christ in good times and bad times. Christ is worthy of our worship.

3. THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST OVER ANGELS IN SOVEREIGNTY

Scripture 4: Hebrews 1:7

Of the angels he says, [citing Psalm 104:4]

“He makes his angels **winds**, and his ministers a **flame of fire.**”

Point: Angels are servants. Winds and fire represent powerful natural agencies.

The original context of Psalm 45 was quite different, referring to the marriage feast of some king of Israel. [cf. God made Moses God (metaphor) to Pharaoh, Exo. 7:1]

Scripture 5: Hebrews 1:8-9

But of the Son he says, [citing Psalm 45:6-7]

“Your throne **[His rule]**, O God, is forever and ever **[eternal]**, **[Observe: God [Father] says to God [Son], the eternal sovereign rule]**

the scepter **[authority]** of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. **[sovereign rule with justice]**

You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; **[holiness of Christ] [as Christ’s disciples we must have the same love and hatred]**

therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions [perhaps angels].” **[incomparable joy of the Father over the Son’s just rule]**

Point: The Son is divine in contrast to angels who are servants (not demeaning, but inferior to the Son)

Scripture 6: Hebrews 1:10-12,

And, **[citing Psalm 102:25-27]**

“You, Lord **[Yahweh’s title applied to the Son]**, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning,

and the heavens are the work of your hands;

they will perish, but you remain;

they will all wear out like a garment,

like a robe you will roll them up,

like a garment they will be changed.

But **you are the same**, and your years will have no end.”

Hebrews 13:8, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Point: Christ is the Creator and the eternal one. The creation is temporal.

Scripture 7: Hebrews 1:13, And to which of the angels has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”? **[citing Psalm 110:1]**

Answer: Not one, none, no one.

Custom: When a king is defeated, he will prostrate himself before the conqueror and kiss his feet.

- ❖ **Hebrews 10:12-13,** But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

Enemies: The devil, the demons and all those who rejected Christ. Therefore, one day every knee will bow before Christ, and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:10, 11; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:24, 25).

❖ **1 Corinthians 15:25-26**, For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Scripture: Hebrews 1:14, Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

The Son is the source of salvation and ruler of the creation: After making purification for sins and enthroned above the creation.

Ministering spirits: Spirits (not physical)

Whereas, angels are servants of those who inherit salvation [saved]: They are constantly sent out to help Christ's disciples.

Who are those who inherit salvation: Those who repent of their sins and trust in the finished work of Christ on the cross for the forgiveness of their sins, reconciliation to the Father, and eternal life. **Did you inherit salvation?**

Illustration: 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 were retreating 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." This story, recorded in Billy Graham's book *Angels*, is one of the great tales of missionary history. The missionary was the "legendary" John G. Paton of the New Hebrides.

Caution:

- ▶ We may not know exactly how angels are engaged in spiritual warfare on behalf of the church, but we can be confident that angels are assigned to serve us.
- ▶ It is not clear from the New Testament that every Christian has a personal or guardian angel.
- ▶ Angels must not be the focus of our attention.
- ▶ We must not engage in communication with angels.

Summary: Christ is superior to angels because he has **a superior name**—he is Son; **a superior honor**—all the angels worship him; **a superior vocation**—he is Sovereign King; **a superior existence**—he is eternal and unchangeable; **a superior status**—he rules the universe. [Kent Hughes]

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did the author of Hebrews write on the superiority of Christ over angels?
2. What factors must we know when reading the Old Testament's Messianic prophecies?
3. What is the meaning of "Angel" and although they are spirit beings, in what gender terms are they described? What does this speak about the power of culture over biblical understanding?
4. Hebrews 1:5a says, For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"? What does "today" refer to, and what does "begotten" mean?
5. Why is Christ called the "Son of David"?
6. What is the meaning of "firstborn"? How do you refute that Christ is not the first creation?
7. Who alone is worthy of worship? If the Father says, "Let all God's angels worship him (Christ)" what does this show about who Christ is?
8. What is the meaning of "the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom"?
9. If Christ loves righteousness and hates wickedness, what must be the disposition of the disciples of Christ?
10. Read Psalm 102 and compare it with Hebrews 1:10-12. To whom were the words attributed in Psalm 102? To whom were the words attributed in Hebrews 1:10-12?
11. What is the meaning of "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8)?
12. What is the meaning of "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? Who are Christ's enemies? How is the promise going to be fulfilled?
13. How did this message personally minister to your heart?