

CHRIST IS SUPERIOR TO THE ANGELS

HEBREWS 01:04–14

Introduction

Angels actually exist. They are a magnificent and glorious order of beings who have been created by God to be His messengers and servants. They are spiritual beings who live in another dimension, the spiritual dimension. They have the glorious privilege of living in God's presence and of serving Him day and night. Because of their high and exalted position, some people have tended to look to angels instead of Christ. They tend to take the thought and attention that is due Christ and give it to angels. They tend to consider angels as their *go-between* between them and God. Four things usually cause this.

=> A person feels unworthy to approach God. He needs someone to approach God for him, someone to serve as an intermediary and mediator for him. He knows that angels are the ministers of God; therefore feeling unworthy himself, the person begins to look to an angel. He wants the angel...

- to communicate with God for him.
- to present his needs and desires to God.
- to protect him.
- to secure God's blessings and care for him.

=> Another person may feel that God is just too far away for him to reach. God is just too inhuman, too big, and too all-embracing. God reaches out beyond all the worlds of outer space. Therefore, the person feels that God is too busy with the big issues of the universe to be concerned with one small person upon earth. The person feels the need for some intermediary, some mediator that is not as big and busy as God, but who has access to God. Therefore, he begins to look to an angel to look after and protect him and to plead his case and to present his needs before God.

=> Some persons seek experiences with angels either face to face or through visions and dreams. They feel that such spiritual experiences are a privilege and that the experience strengthens them and makes them more spiritual. In their minds the angel is an intermediary between them and God, a messenger sent from God to bring them a special word from God.

=> Still others do not believe in Christ, that He is the Son of God. They do not believe that He is the only Mediator between God and man. Therefore, they seek to communicate with the spiritual world through some angel or person in the spiritual world.

The point to note in these approaches to God and the spiritual world is this: angels are exalted as glorious and magnificent beings — as so glorious and magnificent that they stand as mediators or intermediaries between men and God. In every case God is seen as sending an angel or an angel is sought to carry a message between God and man. God is thought either to be too busy or big or unable to communicate and share with man.

Note what happens when men emphasize angels above Christ and above His Spirit and His Word:

- => Note how far away it removes Christ from involvement in a person's life.
- => Note how it places another mediator or intermediary between men and God — someone other than Christ and His Spirit.
- => Note how it relegates and lowers Christ to a lesser position than angels.

This is what this passage is attacking. It is not denying angels, for they do exist. It is not denying the glory and magnificence of angels, for they are glorious and magnificent beings. It is not denying the ministry and service of angels to God, for they are His ministering spirits. What this passage is attacking is this: the emphasis of some people who exalt angels by seeking experiences with them and by focusing thoughts, attention and prayers upon them. Angels are not God's intermediaries and mediators between Himself and us. The only intermediary and Mediator between God and us is God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the only Person who can approach God for us. He is the only Person who can hear and answer our prayers and look after and care for us. This does not mean that He may not use an angel to help us. He does use angels in our lives to guide, protect and encourage us (see *Angels*, Heb. 1:4-14). But the angel serves Christ; the angel is not to be the focus of our attention and thoughts nor praise and honour. The angel is the servant, not the Lord of Jesus nor the Lord of our lives. Christ alone is the Lord — both of the angels and us. Therefore, He and He alone is to be the focus of our attention, thoughts, honour and worship.

This is the thrust of this passage: Christ is superior — far, far superior to the angels.

- I. Christ has a superior name, the name of God's only Son; angels have an inferior name (vv. 4-6).
- II. Christ is God's heir; angels are created subjects of God (vv. 7-9).
- III. Christ is the Creator and Sovereign Lord; angels are created subjects and ministering spirits (vv. 10-14).

HEBREWS 01:04–14 ANGELS (ANGELOS)

The word angel simply means *messenger*. The word is used at least five different ways in Scripture.

- => It is used of men (Lk. 7:24; Jas. 2:25; Rev. 1:20; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14).
- => It is used of Christ (Rev. 8:3-5).
- => It is used of the "angel of the Lord" or the "angel of God," meaning the presence of deity in angelic form (Gen. 16:1-13; 21:17-19; 22:11-16; 31:11-13; Exo. 3:2-4; Judg. 2:1; 6:12-16; 13:3-22).

=> It is used of prophets (Hag. 1:13).

=> It is used of spiritual beings who serve God (Psa. 104:4; Heb. 1:14; 2:2, 5).

1. The important facts about angels seem to be as follows:

- a. Angels are created beings, superior to men (Psa. 104:4; cp. Heb. 1:14; Col. 1:16).
- b. Angels are numerous (Psa. 68:17; Mt. 26:53; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 5:11).
- c. Angels are extremely superior to men in intelligence and knowledge (2 Sam. 14:20; Ps. 103:20; 104:4).
- d. Angels have great power (2 Kng. 19:35; Mt. 28:3; 2 Pet. 2:11; Rev. 20:1-2).
- e. Angels observe men (Eccl. 5:6; 1 Cor. 4:9; Eph. 3:10).
- f. Some angels have fallen with Satan from their original state (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 20:10.)

2. Apparently, angels were created in various ranks and for specific functions to be performed *before God Himself*.

a. There is the archangel Michael who stands above all the other angels. He is the prime administrator of God (Dan. 10:21; 12:1, 7-12; 1 Th. 4:16; Jude 9). Some believe Satan was an archangel, superior even to Michael, before his fall (see Rev. 12:7).

b. There is the angel Gabriel who is God's very special messenger of mercy (Dan. 8:15-16; 9:21; Lk. 1:19-33). He is never called an archangel.

c. The Scripture gives the titles of other angelic orders.

=> There are the seraphim, whose function seems to be to praise God (Isa. 6:1-6, the only reference to them).

=> There are the cherubim, whose function seems to be to proclaim the glory of God (Gen. 3:24; Exo. 25:18; Psa. 80:1; 99:2).

d. Other angels are said to have various functions...

- to worship God (Neh. 9:6; Lk. 2:13-14).
- to rejoice in the repentance of a single sinner (Lk. 15:10).
- to accompany Christ at His second coming (Mt. 24:31; 25:31; Mk. 8:38; 1 Th. 4:16).
- to execute the judgments of God (Gen. 3:24; 19:1; Judg. 5:23; 2 Sam. 24:16; 1 Chron. 2:15; 2 Chron. 32:32; Acts 12:23; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 12:9).

3. Angels have a very important function in God's dealings with believers. Note what Scripture says: They are "all ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" (Heb. 1:14).

- a. They protect and deliver believers either through or from trials (Psa. 34:7; Psa. 91:11; Isa. 63:9; Dan. 3:28; 6:22; Acts 12:7-11).
- b. They guide and lead believers in their ministry (1 Kng. 19:5; Mt. 2:13, 19-20; Acts 5:19; 8:26).
- c. They escort believers into heaven (Lk. 16:22).
- d. They encourage believers (Acts 27:23-25). Note: this assistance seems to begin at childhood and to continue on throughout life (Heb. 1:14; cp. Mt. 18:10; Psa. 91:11). □

HEBREWS 01:04–14 OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES

The writer proves Christ's superiority by quoting seven Old Testament passages and applying them to Christ. The Old Testament passages stand as types which symbolized the coming Messiah or Saviour of the world. The passages are: Heb. 1:5 (2 Sam. 7:14 Psa. 2:7); Heb. 1:6 (Dut. 32:43; Psa. 89:27; 97:7; cp. Lk. 2:13f); Heb. 1:7 (Psa. 104:4); Heb. 1:8-9 (Psa. 45:6-7); Heb. 1:10-12 (Psa. 102:25-27); Heb. 1:13 (Psa. 110:1). □

I. *Hebrews 01:04–06 The Holy Name of Jesus Christ*

Jesus Christ has a superior name, the name of God's Son; angels have an inferior name. This is the first proof that Christ is superior to the angels. He is much *superior* — so much better — to the angels. And note what it is that makes Him superior: it is His name. His name is far more excellent than their name; it ranks far higher with God than the name of angels.

1. Christ is the Son of God; angels are not sons of God. "You are my Son; today I have become your Father" (v. 5; cp. Psa. 2:8).

God said this to Christ, not to the angels. Jesus Christ is the Son of God; He and He alone has been "begotten" (gegenneka), that is, born or sent into the world by God. God did not send or cause an angel to be born into the world; He sent His one and only Son.

⇒ Jesus Christ is the one and only Son of God who was sent into the world.

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

⇒ Jesus Christ is the one and only Son of God who was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead.

Rom 1:4 And who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

Jesus Christ is far, far superior to the angels. He is superior because He is the one and only Son of God. His name is far more superior than the name of angels.

Thought 1. Christ and Christ alone is the one and only Son of God. He and He alone can save us and keep us from perishing (Jn. 3:16). No angel can do this. Therefore, we must look to Christ and to Him alone.

2. Christ has a Father-Son relationship with God the Father.

Heb 1:5 *For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"?* (cp. 2 Sam.7:14)

Christ alone is the one and only Son of God; He alone was sent into the world to establish a relationship between God and men; He alone stands as the Mediator and intermediary between God and men. He alone calls upon God as the Father of the one and only Son, and God alone calls upon Christ as His one and only Son. God has only one perfectly obedient Son and that is Christ.

God said this about Christ, not about angels. Christ alone is the one and only Son of God; He alone was sent into the world to establish a relationship between God and man; He alone stands as the Mediator and intermediary between God and men. God has only one perfectly obedient Son and that is Christ. God sent Christ into the world to secure perfection and righteousness for men, and Christ obeyed God. By His obedience He has established forever a relationship between men and God. Therefore, God is a Father to Christ, a Father who loves and honours His obedient Son, and Christ is a Son to God, a Son who obeys and honours His Father.

Jesus Christ is far, far superior to angels. He is superior because God is a Father and Christ is a Son to God. The name of Jesus Christ is far more superior to God than the name of angels.

Thought 1. Jesus Christ has opened the way to God for man; He and He alone provides a relationship with God; He and He alone was perfectly righteous and obedient to God; He and He alone provides perfection and righteousness for man. No angel can do this. Therefore, we must look to Christ to bring us to God.

2 Cor 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Heb 5:9 *And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.*

Heb 2:10 *In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.*

Heb 7:26 *Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

1 Pet 1:19 *But with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

1 Pet 2:22 *“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”*

3. Jesus Christ is worshipped by angels; they are not worshipped by Him.

Heb 1:6 *And again, when God brings his first-born into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.” (cp. Dut. 32:43; Psa. 89:27; 97:7)*

Note the word “first-born” (prototokos). It means first in the sense of priority and superiority, of being above someone else. It is a word that shows dignity, honour, worth; that someone deserves praise. Jesus Christ is the One who is to be worshipped and praised, not angels.

=> When Jesus Christ was born into this world, He was attended and worshipped by angels. (Lk. 2:13f).

=> When Jesus Christ was taken into the world above, at His resurrection and ascension, He was attended and worshipped by angels (Acts 1:10f).

=> When Jesus Christ returns to this earth again, He shall be attended and worshipped by angels (Mt. 13:41; 16:27; 24:31).

Thought 1. Jesus Christ is the Person who entered the world as Man, to save man. He is the Person who was raised from the dead and who ascended into heaven to conquer death forever. He is the Person who is to return and take us home to heaven to be with God eternally. Angels did not do this. Therefore our worship — our hope and attention and praise — is to be upon Christ. We are to be seeking Christ as our way to God, not angels or some other intermediary. Jesus Christ has a name that is far superior than that of angels.

Phil 2:9-11 *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Heb 5:11-12 *We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!*

Rev 19:16 *On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

Isa 9:6 *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

II. *Hebrews 01:07–09 Jesus Christ, the Sovereign Majesty*

Jesus Christ is God's heir; angels are only created subjects of God. Scripture says this about angels:

He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire (v. 7. cp. Psa.1-4:4.)

Note the word *make*: angels are made, that is created and controlled by God. They are created spirits to serve God in the operation of the universe. Just as wind and fire are used to serve God and men, so angels are used to serve God. But this is not true with Christ. Note two points about Christ.

1. Jesus Christ is God, the Sovereign Majesty who sits upon the throne of God (v.8. Cp. Psa. 45:6.) Note three facts.
 - => The Son is addressed as "God" by God the Father; that is, God the Father calls Jesus Christ *God*. God the Father is saying that Jesus Christ has the very same nature, being and character that He has. Within heaven there is God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.
 - => The Son has a throne that is eternal, for ever and ever.
 - => The Son has an eternal kingdom that is ruled by the sceptre of righteousness.

The point is clear: the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, is not a created servant to God; He is the Sovereign Majesty of the universe. He is God Himself who rules and reigns over the universe. He is the One who sits in dignity and dominion over the universe, not angels. They are created beings, made to serve God just as wind and fire have been made to serve God and men.

John 3:31 "The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all."

Eph 1:19-22 And his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.

Phil 2:9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.

1 Pet 3:22 Who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand — with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

2. Jesus Christ has been anointed with the oil of joy above all companions.

Heb 1:9 *You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy. (cp. Psa. 45:7-8.)*

Who is meant by “companions”? It has to mean all creatures both in heaven and earth, for no being or person nor group of beings or persons are equal to Him. He is anointed.

=> above all angels.

=> above all prophets, priests and kings.

=> above all believers, living and dead.

And note why He is so highly exalted. Because He is God; He loves righteousness and hates wickedness. This means two things.

=> Jesus Christ is totally devoted to righteousness and perfection. He rules and reigns in righteousness; His very nature and being is righteousness. The love of righteousness permeates and flows through His very Being. Righteousness is the only thing that He knows.

=> Jesus Christ came to earth to fulfil and secure righteousness for men. He did this by never sinning and by living a perfect and righteous life before God. Therefore, He stands as the ideal, perfect, and righteous Man. As the ideal Man, His righteousness is able to cover all men who honestly trust Him for righteousness.

Thought 1. The point is striking: no angel has been anointed above others as God. No angel has come to earth and secured righteousness for man; only Jesus Christ has done that. Therefore, we must look to Jesus Christ for righteousness, not to angels. Jesus Christ is the only Person who can make us acceptable to God. Jesus Christ is the only Person who can stir God to count us righteous and acceptable to Him.

Rom 5:1 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2 Cor 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Phil 1:11 *Filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ — to the glory and praise of God.*

III. **Hebrews 01:10–14** *Jesus Christ, the Creator*

Jesus Christ is the Creator and Sovereign Lord; angels are created subjects and ministering spirits. Note three significant facts.

1. Jesus Christ is the Creator of earth and heaven.

Heb 1:10-12 *He also says, “In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain;*

they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.” (cp. Ps. 102:25-27)

Jesus Christ created the universe; angels did not. As Creator, Jesus Christ is above the world; He is the Sovereign Ruler of the world. It is true that the world is changing and that it passes through many stages. It is aging, deteriorating, dissolving, but not Christ. He is unchangeable. The earth will perish, but Jesus Christ will remain eternally. He is above and beyond changing. Therefore, He rules over the world. He is sovereign over its destiny. Jesus Christ is superior to angels because He is the Creator and the Sovereign Ruler who is unchangeable. This makes Him far superior to angels. They actually owe their existence and allegiance to Him as well as their destiny.

John 1:3 *Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*

1 Cor 8:6 *Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.*

Eph 3:9 *And to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.*

Col 1:16 *For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.*

Heb 1:1-2 *In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.*

2. Jesus Christ is the exalted and Sovereign Lord; angels are not.

Heb 1:13 *To which of the angels did God ever say, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?* (cp. Ps. 110:01)

He has been exalted to God’s right hand, which is a position of...

- love and joy
- triumph and victory
- power and sovereignty
- justice and judgment
- honour and dignity
- rule and authority
- responsibility and duty

Christ has finished His work upon earth as the faithful and obedient Son of God — perfectly faithful and obedient in dying for the sins of men. He has conquered and triumphed over the forces of sin and death for men and made it possible for them to

be saved and to live eternally with God. Therefore, God has highly exalted Christ to His right hand. And Christ shall sit there until He is ready to return in judgment and to subject His enemies (make them His footstool).

Thought 1. The point is this: at no time has God ever told an angel to sit on His right hand nor to conquer the enemies of men. But He has given this right and authority to Christ. Therefore, Christ is the One to whom men are to look. Christ is to be the focus of men's attention and thoughts, the One to whom men are to look for salvation and life — not angels.

Rom 14:9 *For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.*

John 1:36 *When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!"*

Rev 5:12 *In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!"*

3. Angels are the ministering spirits of Christ sent to serve believers. The heirs of salvation are those who believe in Jesus Christ. Note that angels are not *lords*, but servants. They are servants of Christ. They are spirits, spiritual beings of the spiritual world, and they exist to carry out the will of Christ. The will of Christ for angels is that they minister to believers — to minister to men and women for whom Christ has done so much: purchased their salvation and given them eternal life.

Thought 1. The point is that angels are servants, not lords. Christ and Christ alone is the Lord to whom men are to look and trust for salvation.

Acts 12:7 *Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.*

Acts 27:23 *Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me.*

Heb 1:14 *Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?*

Exo 14:19 *Then the angel of God, who had been travelling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them.*

Psa 91:11 *For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.*

Dan 6:22 *"My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king." ■*