

# Hebrews 1 (Part 2):4-14 - The Son Superior to the Angels

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Open your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 1 and this is part 2. We're going to continue on here where we left off. We're picking up the text in verse 4, however, because verse 4 kind of comes in the middle of a sentence, I want to go back and just begin reading it.

Verse 3, but we're going to be doing verse 4, technically through the end of the chapter. Starting in verse 3, it says:

<sup>3</sup> *“He (and that speaking of Jesus) 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,*

<sup>4</sup> *having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.”*

<sup>5</sup> *For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”?*

<sup>6</sup> *And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God's angels worship him.”*

<sup>7</sup> *Of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.”*

<sup>8</sup> *But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”*

<sup>10</sup> *And, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands;*

<sup>11</sup> *they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment,*

*12 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.”*

*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”?*

*14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?” (ESV)*

Let's stop there and let's pray before we get into it.

Heavenly Father, we open our hearts to you today as we continue now the study here of Hebrews, we really pray for insight and grace to understand.

We pray that you administer to each and every heart, and we pray, Lord, that you would give us grace to apprehend the word and apply it to every aspect of our lives.

We believe the word of God is living, we believe that it is active, and we believe, Lord, that you are using it even now to strengthen and encourage our heart.

And so, Father God, we ask that you minister your spirit among us through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen. Amen.

You know, whenever we start a new book of the Bible, and I know this is the second installment here of our study of Hebrews, but it's always important to remember when we get into a new study, that the chapter and verse divisions that we find in our Bibles and that we rely on so heavily to find a particular passage of scripture, didn't come about until the 16th century.

And that sounds crazy, that the church could exist for 1500 years or so without chapters and verses in the Bible. I mean, how in the world did they find particular passages of the Bible?

Well, we know that chapters and verses can make things easier for us, but I have to tell you, they can also contribute to some pretty bad habits among believers today.

And one of those bad habits is, ignoring the context of a passage and using verses specifically to isolate certain concepts or truths that are laid out in the Bible in such a way that we see only that isolated verse and not the context in which it was given.

In fact, a little bit later here in our study of the book of Hebrews, when we get into the sixth chapter, we're going to look at some verses that many people find very challenging, and in fact, I get notes pretty often about a particular verse in Hebrews chapter 6 that really causes people a lot of consternation. But the reason that it causes them so much trouble is because they read one verse, isolated from the context, and they try to figure out what it means.

And they struggle to understand it and it causes great angst and fear among people when they don't consider the context. And we're not going to make that same mistake as we go through this challenging letter which is full of warnings.

You need to understand that this letter is full of warnings because it was written to Jews who had come to know Christ as their savior, but who were being tempted to abandon their faith in Jesus and go back under the law of Moses in order to minimize the persecution and hatred that was being leveled at them as believers.

So, there are some challenging warnings that are given in this book, but they can be understood when they are understood properly, within their context.

Now, as we get into this section, we see if we're going to, again, look at context, we see that the context of this, the rest of chapter 1 is kind of a rapid fire examination of several Old Testament passages that the writer uses to show the superiority of Jesus over the angelic beings, and we'll explain more about that in just a moment.

But I want to also tell you that this is one of the reasons why I personally believe Apollos is the author of this letter. We're told in the book of Acts that he had an incredible handle on the Old Testament prophecies and he used them powerfully to prove that Jesus is the Messiah.

This letter, unlike many of the letters in the New Testament, just goes over the top in using Old Testament scripture to do that very thing. To prove that Jesus is the unique Son of God. And we're going to see that here in this chapter.

But as we look at this chapter and we look at the point of what the writer is doing, which is comparing Jesus with angels, we're immediately kind of caught off guard and we wonder why is he even doing that?

I mean, why is it even necessary for the writer of Hebrews to compare Jesus with angels? Because he spends a lot of time doing it. Here, the remainder of this chapter and the next chapter is also going to be used by the author to compare the superiority of Jesus to angels and so we're kind of wondering to ourselves, what's the big deal?

What is the big deal with angels? Well, first of all, this is just one of several comparisons that the author is going to make between Jesus and other characters, but he begins with angels because in the order of creation, angels are at the top of the food chain. They are the highest form of created beings.

There are no created beings above the angels, they're the top. So, to prove that Jesus is superior, even to angels, is to open the door of our understanding as to the true nature of the Son of God.

And that is primarily what the writer of Hebrews is trying to accomplish. It's kind of like the author of Hebrews is trying to do in words what Jesus did when he took Peter, James and John up onto the Mount of Transfiguration.

And you'll remember that Jesus had been talking to the disciples about who he was for a long time. But it wasn't until they got up onto the Mount of Transfiguration that what he had been saying to them was seen in a powerful demonstration of the transfiguration of Jesus whereby his glory was revealed to the disciples, and they heard the voice of the Father saying, "this is my beloved Son, listen to him." (Matthew 17:5)

You have to know that experience was incredible for these men. The writer of Hebrews is attempting to bring that same experience to you and I by citing Old Testament passages, speaking of Jesus, comparing those Old Testament passages with other characters of the Old Testament; including angels, and describing for us the superiority of the Son. Now, I will tell you right now that there are other reasons why the author is comparing Jesus to angels, but we're actually going to wait and reveal those next time in Hebrews chapter 2.

But for now, it is in verse 4 where this theme begins to take shape in these verses where the writer says, "*having become*," look with me in your Bible, verse 4:

<sup>4</sup> "*Having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.*" (ESV)

Remember when the Bible talks about the name of someone, it's not just talking about a moniker or a title. The name of someone in the Bible speaks of their nature; it speaks of who they are. It speaks of everything they have ever said about themselves. And to say, I believe in your name, is to say, I believe you are who you said that you are.

Now, having established his theme here in this very first verse, verse 4, the writer goes on to present then several Old Testament passages, most of which are from the Psalms, to make his point further in this work of comparison.

And he begins in verse 5, if you look with me in your Bible saying:

<sup>5</sup> *“For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”?”* (ESV)

And that's a quote from Psalm chapter 2. Or again, he writes:

*“<sup>5</sup>...I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”?*” (ESV)

And there we have a quotation from 2 Samuel chapter 7. And in each of these passages, the Lord is quoted here speaking of the Son. In other words, God the Father is quoted as speaking of the Son, and He refers to Him as my Son and to no angel did God ever say, you are my Son, but concerning Jesus, God says, you are my Son, today I have begotten you.

And it's so important that we understand these words here because right away, the author is setting Jesus above all other beings by declaring that Jesus is begotten of the Father.

That word begotten, I don't know if you've ever stopped to really think about the meaning of that word, but it is incredibly vital that you understand the implications of the word begotten.

John actually repeats this idea by using the same Greek word, although the ESV doesn't use the word begotten in this case, but in the most, well, arguably the most famous passage in the Bible, which is John 3:16.

Let me show it to you here. In this verse it says:

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### **John 3:16 (ESV)**

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son (And here in the ESV, those words are translated: “Only Son”), that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

And even though the word begotten is not used here in the ESV’s version of John 3:16, it is the exact same Greek word that is translated begotten in Hebrews and elsewhere, and by other translations.

But here in the ESV, they simply use the word only, but this is an interesting Greek word. It's the Greek word monogenes. Monogenes. Now, what do you hear in there? The first part of that word is mono. Did you hear that? Mono. And we know that the word mono means one, or, in the Greek, that word is monas and the definition of the Greek word monas means alone in terms of unique. He alone is God's Son.

So, what we're being told here is that Jesus is the only unique, or if you will, begotten Son of God. Angels, I will tell you are referred to in the scripture as sons of God or the sons of God. But no single angel is ever referred to as the unique begotten Son of God and that's what makes the word begotten so important for you and I to understand.

Angels are created. As to his human nature, Jesus is begotten; begotten of the Father. The differences are huge between created and begotten, and it's important that we understand that. Remember that we're told in the Book of Luke that, when Jesus was placed, if you will, conceived in the womb of Mary, the Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit came upon her (Luke 1:35) and the conception was spiritual and miraculous so that Jesus is unique as to his human nature.

Now, you'll remember, the second reference that the writer uses here is from 2 Samuel, and that's where he says:

*“I will be to him, a father, and he will shall be to me a son.” 2 Samuel 7:14 (ESV)*

Now, did you notice those references to time? This is very interesting in this quote from 2 Samuel, he says:

“...I will be to him, (“I will be to him” – this was repeated for emphasis) and he shall be to me.” 2 Samuel 7:14 (ESV)

Those speak of something that is happening in the future, because of course, this quotation comes from many years prior to the incarnation of Jesus and so, it is spoken of in the future.

“I will be to him a Father, He shall be to me a Son.” (2 Samuel 7:14) And this passage beautifully speaks of the fact that there was a time, God set aside a time. And this is, this is kind of crazy and it kind of tweaks our minds a little bit, but there is a time when God the Father and the eternal word of God took on a new relationship.

That relationship is Father and Son. I will “future” be his Father, he shall “future” be my Son. Now, what I'm telling you here is that Jesus, which is a human name, but we refer to him as Jesus, even though that name wasn't given until a point in time, but Jesus became the Son of God as we see in these verses, and frankly others.

Now, I do need to admit to you right here, right now, that there are many fine Christian brothers and sisters, who will argue for the fact, that they believe in what is referred to as the eternal sonship of Jesus Christ. I don't know if you've ever heard that term before: The eternal sonship of Jesus. And basically, what that means is that Jesus has always been the Son of God.

Since we know that he was slain from the foundations of the earth, there are many who believe that his sonship is and always has been eternal. I don't see it.

Now, it's not a big deal, it doesn't take anything away from the deity of Christ, it doesn't remove anything from the humanity of Christ. But I have to just tell you, I don't see it in the scripture.

What I see in the word of God is what I just showed you in 2 Samuel, but is also corroborated elsewhere in the word and that is that prior to his incarnation, the biblical writers used a different name or title, if you will, to describe the Son.

I want to show you another passage from John's Gospel. We're in chapter 1 and we're looking at verses 1, and then skipping down to verse 14. It says:

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**John 1:1,14 (ESV)**

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became (that's a timed word) flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of (here we go again) the only son (your bible may say the only begotten of the father or as the ESV says:) as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

So, I want you to see here that the biblical writer establishes the fact that, Jesus, prior to his incarnation, is the word of God. He speaks of Him from all eternity as the word; he says: "In the beginning was the Word, the word was with God, the word was God and then he became flesh" and now He took on that new role as the unique Son of God.

So, the writer establishes this fact that Jesus has a unique place above the angels as the begotten of the Father. No angel is begotten, angels are created and so forth.

So, and I want to remind you here again, the word begotten only refers to the incarnation. Jesus is not begotten before the incarnation. Begotten is a term that describes literally Mary being impregnated with the Holy Son of God. That is where begotten comes, so we have to keep that straight.

Now, the writer goes on in verse 6 and he says, if you look with me in your Bible:

*<sup>6</sup> "And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." " (ESV)*

All right, now this is where the writer of Hebrews ups the ante, if you will, a little bit in this whole comparison thing between Jesus and angels. He is using an interpretive citation of Psalm 97 to say that the Father commands the angels to worship the Son, and that is in fact what we see happening when we get into the book of Revelation.



Let me show you a passage from Revelation chapter 5, it goes like this: (John writing here)

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**Revelation 5:6-8,14 (ESV)**

*And... I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain...And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb... And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshipped.*

Now, this is an important passage for us to see because it agrees with what the writer of Hebrews is saying related to the unique begotten Son of God. He is to be worshiped by the angels and worship is a key element since only God is worthy of worship. And you know, remember, the writer here is addressing this letter to Jews. And Jews fully understood that they were to worship God and God alone. They were not to extend their worship or give their worship to anyone or any other being.

And so, this becomes this incredible evidence of the son's superiority to the angelic host because he's the one who receives the worship of the angels. Now, concerning angels, he goes on to say in verse 7:

*<sup>7</sup> "Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire."'" (ESV)*

So, angels were told here are ministering spirits. He'll have more to say about that in just a bit toward the end of this chapter. But this is a quote from Psalm 104 and then verse 8.

"Of the son, he says", and this is the comparison, and now quoted from Psalm 45:

*<sup>6</sup> "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness;*

*<sup>7</sup> you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;" (ESV)*

Notice, that the Father speaks to the Son here saying, “your throne, oh God, is forever and ever”. And yet, admittedly, the language here is challenging because while God the Father addresses Jesus as God, He also says, your God has anointed you, which is interesting. How can a God have a God?

And this is probably what trips people, I think a lot of people up. When Jesus makes reference in the gospels to my God and your God, and refers to His Father in prayer, Father God, and speaks of him to other people as His God. It just really messes with people's minds and their thinking. How in the world can He be God? And you tell me there's only one God, and yet He refers to His Heavenly Father as His God. How can that be? How is that even possible?

Well, once again, we're standing on holy ground here people, and it is a ground full of mystery and we've talked about mystery in the past, but it's a mystery, specifically concerning the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man, and therein lies the mystery.

So, we have to make, kind of make up our minds right here at the get-go that the reality is going to be challenging for some of us in, in terms of these relational descriptions between God the Son and God the Father, where God the Son, refers to the Father as His God more than just his Father. And so that is, that is challenging.

But I want to go on and just tell you that I want to notice here that God the Father speaks of the fact that He has anointed the Son. Did you catch that? In those verses? He has anointed the Son. This is biblical language of inauguration and it's right out of the books of 1 and 2 Samuel, books of Kings and so forth where oil was used to anoint the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah at their inauguration.

And in the same way we're told here, that God the Father has anointed the Son as the King of all kings, not just a king but the King. He has been anointed as the King. Now the Father continues speaking here in verse 10:

*<sup>10</sup> “And, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands;”” (ESV)*

Now, this shouldn't come to a big surprise or as a big surprise to us because in our last study, our first study in Hebrews here, chapter 1, we saw that Jesus is the creator when the writer of Hebrews described Him. Remember back in verse 2, He said that He's the one through whom the world was created.

And so, this is not new information for us, but Jesus is described here in comparison to the angels now as the master creator of the heavens and the earth and the, the whole point of this is that the author wants us to know that Jesus as the creator, transcends His creation, not just the creation of angels, but the rest of creation.

And that's why he goes on to say in verse 11, if you look with me:

*<sup>11</sup> "they (and that speaks of the heavens and the earth) will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment,*

*<sup>12</sup> 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." "* (ESV)

These are all quotations out of the 102 Psalm and here we're also seeing that Jesus is not just the creator, but He is the one who transcends the creation and will bring the creation to an end. He says, "you will roll up the creation, you will cast it off like an old garment, like something that's been worn and is ready to be thrown away".

And the psalmist makes reference here to this rolling up of the creation like a robe and tossing it away; changing it out. And, and we are told here that, that Jesus is the one who's going to bring this about because the Father is speaking of the Son when He says these things.

Now, of course, we know from the Book of Revelation in case you're all worried about the creation going away, that the throwing away of the old creation is simply a precursor to the, the bringing forth of the new creation.

The Bible tells us that there will come a new heaven and a new earth that will be made and what is going to be very significant about this new heaven and new earth is that they will be merged in the new creation. Heaven and earth will become one. And that's a mind blowing thought to think about it.

They're separated right now in the world that you and I live in, but one day they will be connected.

Now in verses 13 and 14, the comparison between Jesus and the angels continues but this time with a quote from Psalm 110. Look with me in verse 13:

<sup>13</sup> *“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”?”*

<sup>14</sup> *Are they (And he's talking about angels here) not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation? ””* (ESV)

So here, the writer of Hebrews reminds us that God the Father has given the promise of victory to the Son saying, “sit here, sit in my right hand until I make your enemies a foot stool for your feet”.

Now, this is a reference that is probably challenging to some people, but it is a reference to how the kings of old, when they conquered an opposing enemy, used to make their enemies lie on the ground and they would place their foot on the neck or the back of their conquered foe. And it was kind of a symbolic act of domination, as if to say, the Lord has given me dominion over you. I have conquered you by the hand of God.

So, the emphasis here is that Jesus is the promised victor over all the enemies of God, and that His victory is completely assured. So, this is something that sets Jesus apart from all other beings and He is the one through whom God triumphs.

And then you'll notice that the chapter ends with a reminder that the angels have a status that is inferior to the Son.

The writer says, are they not ministering spirits? And what that means is that it is the essential nature of angels to be servants. That is what God created them to be. They are given the task to serve those who will inherit salvation. And I want to just remind you that, that includes you and me, which is kind of a trip to think about, right? I mean, angels have been given the task of serving us. Now of course, they serve Jesus too, because He is also the one who inherits the kingdom and all that God gives. But, but we are joint heirs with Jesus and so as joint heirs, the angels are also given to serve us, which is pretty cool.

You can see, I think, as we complete this chapter, how important all of these Old Testament references are as they are strung together to form a single solid argument for the superiority of Jesus Christ as the one through whom God's plan of redemption is brought to fruition.

And it is so much, it is so significant when we remember, again, the context and that is the letter being written to Jewish Christians being tempted to go back under the law to reject Jesus as the single most important person through or upon whom the redemption of God rests, through whom we are saved.

And the writer is reminding them of what they already know, Jesus is the central figure in God's plan of redemption and there's no other way. There's no other way.

Now we're going to be getting into Hebrews chapter 2 next time, and even though he is going to continue to argue somewhat from the perspective of comparison of Jesus with angels, he also has some incredible things to say in chapter 2.

I'm probably going to take that chapter as a single study, but we'll just have to wait and see how that goes. But I know that it's going to be very important for you to go through this second chapter of Hebrews and I would encourage you to read through it several times, perhaps in the coming week or so. So that when we sit down to really get into it, you'll be better prepared to understand.

So, let's go ahead and stand together as a body. I'm going to close in prayer and dismiss us today. I want to just remind you that we will have individuals up front here to pray with you if you have any prayer need, and we really encourage you to take advantage of that.

These people are here just to pray in agreement with you for whatever is on your heart or mind, whatever burden you need to kind of offload at the throne of grace. These people are, not necessary from the standpoint that you know, you, they're needed so that you can pray. You can certainly pray alone, but there's something very comforting and very lovely about coming together with others and agreeing in prayer, and I hope that's a blessing for you.

So, let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you so much for the study today as we've completed this first chapter of Hebrews. And we have seen how the writer has systematically enlarged our perspective, our understanding of the only unique, begotten Son of God. And Lord I pray that you'd help us to really put these things into perspective in our heart and mind. And I know, Lord, that we're dealing with things that in some cases are beyond our human comprehension from the standpoint of reconciling the humanity of Jesus with the deity of Jesus and knowing how those come together in this single person.

But even so, Father, we just, we stand in awe of your glory and your goodness, your mercy, and your love.

And I pray my Father God, that we would keep Jesus as the center of our understanding, the center of all of our theology, the center of our belief, the center of our hope. Our hope is in Jesus, His death for us, His resurrection declaring victory over sin and death and his soon return. That is our heart, Lord, come, Lord Jesus, we thank you and we praise you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our King.

Amen. Amen. God bless you. Have a good rest of your day.