

The Book of Hebrews

Part 3: Greater Than the Angels (Heb. 1:4-14)

I. Shifting the Focus: Angels to Christ

After giving us a brief introduction to the glory of Jesus and his victory over sin, the writer moves on to his first point:

4 He is infinitely greater than angels, for he inherited a rank and a Name far greater than theirs. (Hebrews 1:4 TPT)

As we still find today, some of the people to whom this letter was written were obsessed with angels. The rank, order, and names of angels were a big focus of people's spiritual attention. We see this in extra-biblical and apocryphal writings of the day. A similar message comes forth in the book of Colossians (see Colossians 2:18-19).

The writer to the Hebrews is starting with a call to shift focus. Before even getting to Moses and the Law in chapter two, he deals first with this overemphasis of angels.

- The topic of angels is also an introduction to the bigger issue of the Law of Moses as we will see in Hebrews 2:2. There it says angels were the main messengers involved in the communications of the Old Covenant.

Angels are a key part of God's kingdom and play an important role in our lives. We're not minimizing the significance of the angelic. We'll look at this in the concluding verses of this chapter. However, the study of angels and other beings within the supernatural realm often becomes a type of "spiritual porn" for God's people.

Not content with their marriage to Jesus, people spend hours diverting their attention to other spiritual beings, engaging in all kinds of conspiracies and seeking different levels of knowledge surrounding angelic and demonic realms. To this day, a church conference or event focused on angels and demons will typically sell more tickets than one that is solely focused on Jesus and his work on the cross.

Just as porn is a way for someone to skip the relational work of intimacy with their spouse, focusing on angels and demons is often just a way to find spiritual fascination outside of engaging the heart in an intimate and conversational relationship with Jesus.

Yet the payoff to true intimacy with the Son of God is worth far more than any other spiritual affair! Like in a real marriage, there is a depth and glory to our heavenly Partner that is worth the pursuit. We need our eyes opened to see this.

II. The Joyful Divinity of Christ

In this next portion, the author begins to remind the readers of the incredibly vast difference between Jesus and other spiritual beings. With this comes an incredible amount of insight into the person of Christ.

As this chapter goes on, we will see the truth of Jesus's divine sonship and his identity as God himself. Hebrews 1 is one of the foundational passages of Scriptures affirming the Deity of Christ.

5 For God has never said to any angel what he said to Jesus: *"You are my favored Son, today I have fathered you."*

And this: *"I will be the Father to him, and he will be the Son to me."*

6 And again, when he brought his firstborn Son into the world: *"Let all my angels bow down before him and kiss him in worship."*

(Hebrews 1:5-6 TPT)

The writer begins a steady stream of quotes from the Old Testament. He affirms what he said in the beginning of the letter: God has spoken through all the various writers of the Scriptures, yet his communication were leading to this all-important revelation of sonship.

In this passage, we see that Jesus is worshipped and adored by angels. Angels serve Jesus with passion and purpose, knowing how worthy and beautiful he is.

7 And about his angels he says, *"I make my angels swift winds, and my ministers fiery flames."*

8 But about his Son, he called him *"God,"* saying, *"Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever and you will rule your kingdom with justice and righteousness. 9 For you have cherished righteousness and detested lawlessness. For this reason, God, your God, has anointed you and poured out the oil of bliss on you more than on any of your friends."*

(Hebrews 1:7-9)

Here is where Jesus is directly referred to as "God." We see the mystery of the Trinity here with God the Father and God the Son interacting. We also see a hidden reference to the Holy Spirit since "oil" is often a symbol of God the Spirit.

- See Leviticus 2:1-2, Luke 4:18, and Acts 10:38. This is a small sample of the many Scriptures that clearly connect "anointing oil" with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus has been anointed with the oil of bliss. He has been given this holy "anointing oil" more than any others. This speaks to the reality that Jesus is the One who carries the fullness of the Holy Spirit (see John 3:34).

But there is more to unearth in this passage as we look at the oil of the Spirit referred to as the oil of bliss. This makes sense since “joy” is the first fruit of the Holy Spirit mentioned after love (Galatians 5:22).

Jesus is specifically anointed and filled with the JOY of the Holy Spirit. Take this into consideration:

Jesus is the happiest Being in the universe!

Jesus is in an infinitely good mood. When a person receives this truth, their intimacy and closeness with the Lord is enhanced significantly. This is because happy people are easy to be around!

And, as it says in Nehemiah 8:10, the joy of the Lord releases strength within us!

III. The Creative Divinity of Christ

10 And he called him Lord, saying, “Lord, you formed the earth in the beginning and with your own hands you crafted the cosmos. 11 They will both one day disappear, but you will remain forever! They will all fade like a worn-out garment, 12 And they will be changed like clothes, and you will fold them up and put them away. But you are ‘I AM.’ You never change, years without end!”

(Hebrews 1:10-12)

Building on what we saw in the opening verses of the letter, Jesus is referred to here as the One who crafted and shaped creation itself. This brings more emphasis to the call to shift our gaze from created things—whether angels or humans—to the One who made everything in the first place.

God is the highest of all creation, the most majestic Being you could ever hope to encounter, the One who made every star and every variety of heavenly being in the spiritual realm. He is the eternal Ocean from which all streams of creativity and spiritual encounters flow. He is the Uncreated Source of all. Everything fades away, but his glory lasts forever.

Jesus—God the Son—is truly worth every bit of our attention and pursuit.

13 And God has never said this to any of his angels: “Take your seat next to me at my right hand until I force your whispering enemies to be a rug under your feet.”

(Hebrews 1:13 TPT)

This quote from Psalm 110 is now leading us back into the key revelation of the letter. Not only is Jesus our Creator, but he is our Savior—the One who conquered sin and death.

A core message of this letter is that *Jesus is seated*. We saw this in the opening paragraph (“*he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty...*”) and now it comes up again.

During the time Hebrews was written there were still Levitical priests taking care of the temple. None of these priests would be allowed to sit down until their work was finished and they were off duty. Jesus being seated reveals the **finality** of what he did at the cross.

This revelation brings joy to the heart, and we will return to it again and again... For now, let’s recognize how the writer is urging us to let go of anything that keeps us from pursuing the eternal beauty of Jesus and the joy of finding our rest in his finished work.

IV. A Lesson on Interpreting Scripture

Throughout this passage, the writer is quoting from the Old Testament, particularly the Psalms which are filled with revelation about the Messiah.

In the time Hebrews was written (and still to this day), there were those who read these same passages, often with great zeal, passion, and insight, and completely missed the connection to Christ.

For example, referring to Jesus as “God” in the Psalm 45:7 quote (“*Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever...*”) was a tough pill for people to swallow. Many would look at that passage and dismiss such a connection, saying the writer of Hebrews was stretching the text to fit his own agenda. To any person who reads the Bible hyper-literally, connecting some of these Scriptures to Jesus can indeed seem like a stretch.

This is important to understand because modern Bible scholars still have a hard time going beyond the literal level of Bible reading to seeing the symbolic message that points to Christ and his finished work. They too claim it is a stretch.

Nonetheless, this is the lens the writer of Hebrews had in viewing the Bible. And this is how Jesus himself interpreted Scripture, which we see immediately after his resurrection:

27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them *the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.*
(Luke 24:27)

The point of studying the Bible is to discover the “*things concerning Himself*”—Jesus. This isn’t to dismiss understanding context, history, and other literal levels of study; however, the overarching reality of Christ—who he is and what he’s done—needs to be at the forefront of all “Bible study.”

Studying the Bible **only** to learn life lessons and morals puts a person in danger of legalism—as opposed to growing in the revelation of our union with Christ. From that revelation, life lessons and morals can be properly taught and embraced.

We come back to what was said in the first line of the whole letter. God spoke in “fragments” of the truth through the Old Testament. Now we have the full picture with the coming of Christ.

An Old Testament Text Through a Christ-Focused Lens

Example #1

5 At that time I stood between the LORD and you to declare to you the word of the LORD, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain... (Deuteronomy 5:5 NIV)

Literally, this passage is about Moses speaking to God on behalf of the Israelites. However, one can read this passage symbolically with Moses representing the Law itself. The Law “stands between us and God.” This means that approaching God through legalism will always create a barrier between us and our Father. This is a message taught and affirmed in the New Testament in passages such as Galatians 3 and Romans 7.

Example #2

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: 2 "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites." (Joshua 1:1-2 NIV)

Another example is the conquest of Canaan. Such stories of warfare were not about the physical battle, but a revelation of Christ conquering the “Promised Land” of human souls that rightly belongs to God. The “giants” of the story do not represent flesh and blood entities but strongholds that occupy the territory of people’s hearts. Jesus is the true “Joshua” who brings us into the Promised Land of salvation. (This is specifically unpacked in Hebrews 3.)

V. The Function of Angels

**14 What role then, do the angels have? The angels are spirit-messengers sent by God to serve those who are going to be saved.
(Hebrews 1:14)**

Angels are spiritual beings commissioned to serve and assist us. Though they know we are weak and frail beings, they delight to minister to us. They see the mystery of Christ within and want to bless us as God's children.

Angels are an extremely important part of God's kingdom. Many of them are messengers who deliver words and plans from God. Many of the dreams and prophetic words/impressions we receive come directly from angels. The entire book of Revelation was handed to John through the ministry (service) of an angel (Revelation 1:1).

This is because God is the ultimate Delegator. He delegates everything in his Kingdom, including the spreading of the Gospel across the planet. Much of what he does in our personal lives gets delegated to angels on our behalf.

We should absolutely embrace a partnership with angelic beings. We should ask for their increased activity in our lives. However, our hearts are not to be obsessed with them. We should find our joy and focus in the One they are serving. In the book of Revelation, John himself had to learn this lesson.

**10 Then I fell at his (the angel's) feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."
(Revelation 19:10)**

Our joyful Creator, the eternal King of the universe, is deeply in love with us. We are co-heirs with Jesus and members of the Trinity's household. This is our greatest delight. Angels are there to help us on our journey of stepping into this reality—and awakening the rest of the world to it.