



First Baptist Church Selmer

JESUS IS BETTER • JESUS, THE PERFECT IMPRINT OF GOD'S NATURE •
HEBREWS 1:1-14 • 5/7/2023

MAIN POINT

Jesus is the perfect picture of the nature and character of God.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What do you know about angels? What do they look like? What is their purpose?

Will we be like angels one day?

There are likely many stories today about our experience or belief about angels that will go unsaid. For the Bible to speak often about angels, there seem to still be various opinions on them.

In 2011, CBS News conducted a poll in the United States about angels. Approximately 88% of Christians stated they believed in angels but get this, over 40% of non-Christians also believed in angels.

Why do you think it is more likely for people to believe in angels than they do in Jesus?

We have a lot to unpack over the next few months as we begin a journey in the book of Hebrews. We will learn that the central theme of this book is the supremacy of Jesus Himself. In other words, Jesus is greater than all things and the book of Hebrews sets out to prove this very point!!

The book of Hebrews was written in approximately 60-70 A.D. most likely to a Jewish Christian audience. The authorship of the book is still unknown but the overarching theme of the supremacy of Jesus is central to the book itself. The book is found in the New Testament but is

filled with numerous Old Testament passages showing us that the Bible tells one united story. The story is this, it is all about Jesus!!!!

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ HEBREWS 1:1-4

1 "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 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. 3 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, 4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs." (ESV)

How do these verses state God revealed Himself to our fathers?

But, how has He revealed Himself to us today?

The Bible consists of 66 books, 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. It is broken down into various portions based on genre.

The Old Testament consists of the Law (Torah), Historical, Poetry, Major Prophets, and Minor Prophets. Each of these genres lays the foundation for the New Testament as the Messiah is revealed to us in Jesus. The New Testament consists of the Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and the Book of Revelation.

Hebrews 1:1-2 states that *"God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son."* It does not mean that the Bible is divided in scope but rather by God's revelation to mankind. He spoke through prophets in the Old Testament but in, and through, Jesus in the New Testament.

What three ways does it say that Jesus reflects God the Father?

What does it mean when it states, *"the exact imprint of his nature"*?

Hebrews 1:3 states that 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."* What a statement. The author of

Hebrews, which is not fully known, wants to communicate to us that Jesus is the perfect picture of God Himself.

Finally, where does the passage state that Jesus should rank in regard to the angels?

Jesus is greater than all things including the angels... and it is not even close!

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ HEBREWS 1:5-9

5 "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'? 6 And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him.' 7 Of the angels he says, 'He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.' 8 But of the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.'" (ESV)

Why is it important for us to see such a vast difference between Jesus and the angels?

What role do angels play in their relationship to Jesus?

One vast contrast to make in attempting to compare Jesus to angels is how they came to be. The Bible is quite clear that Jesus is God and therefore was never created. He has always been and will forever be. The angels however, are created beings. They were created with a very distinct purpose, *"Let all God's angels worship him"* and *"ministering spirits sent out to serve"* (Heb. 1:14). Angels were created to worship Jesus and serve Him as they minister to humanity.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ HEBREWS 1:10-14

10 "And, 'You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; 11 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)

Why is it important to see that Jesus was not created?

How would a Christian's belief in Jesus change if He was just another created being like the angels?

How does this prove to us that Jesus is God?

We see very clearly that Jesus was present prior to and during the *"(laying) the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of (His) hands."* The Gospel of John confirms this statement in John 1:1 states, *"In the beginning was the Word (Jesus), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*

There has never been a time that Jesus didn't exist. This fact alone places Jesus far above any created being including mankind or the angels.

Earlier in verse 6, the Bible refers to Jesus as the *"firstborn."* The idea in this passage is not that Jesus was created, but rather conveys preeminence in the family lineage and therefore holds the rights of the inheritance. This is not a chronological birth but one of rank and honor. Sitting at the right hand of the king was considered to be the place of privilege and power. The Bible states that angels were created to worship God for all eternity but that there is one that sits at His right hand in the place of privilege and power. Just One!!! His name is Jesus!

APPLICATION

Discuss how to apply what you have studied.

Why is our view of Jesus as the Son of God vital in our Christian walk?

How can our lives speak to our personal beliefs about Jesus, either good or bad?

How can we as a group encourage one another to put Jesus before anything else in our lives?

PRAYER

God, help us to see Jesus above all things. Help us to live our lives with an ever-growing desire to serve Jesus with our lives. Show us how to lead others to a knowledge of Jesus by the example we set for them.

COMMENTARY

| HEBREWS 1

1:1. The unknown author of Hebrews tells us three things. First, God spoke. He has revealed himself. Second, God spoke to the forefathers. Third, God did this speaking through the prophets.

God spoke at many times. He revealed a little here and a little there. God also spoke in various ways. He spoke through visions, angels, events, and people.

1:2–3. What God announced through the prophets was important. What he spoke through his Son was climactic, definitive, and superlative. We are living in the last days, not in a chronological sense but in a theological sense. Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension showed that we have entered new territory in God's plans. In these final days, God has spoken through his Son.

The overwhelming superiority of the Son is described with seven majestic phrases. The first two show the relationship of the Son to creation. Jesus is the heir of all things in that he will ultimately have control over all creation (Heb. 2:8). God worked through his Son to make the universe of time and space (Col. 1:16).

The next two phrases show the Son's relationship to the Father. As the radiance of God's glory, the Son reflects God's spotless purity; he shined into human hearts (John 1:9). As the exact representation of God's being, the Son has the divine substance of the Father. This was a bold proclamation of Jesus' deity. Jesus is God.

The fifth phrase shows something the Son is now doing in the world. God's creative word formed the world of time and space (Heb. 11:3). The sustaining word of the Son maintains it. As the sustainer of the world, the Son carries God's plan to its conclusion. With Jesus in charge, we know that the world will not fall into utter chaos. God's plans will triumph.

The sixth and seventh phrases focus on the redemptive work of Christ. The Son brought us God's grace because his death removed the stain of sin. Jesus has provided purification for sins as an act of supreme grace without any merit on our part. After dealing with our sins, Jesus ascended the throne. In his resurrection and ascension, he assumed a place of honor at God's right hand. Today we proclaim him as Lord.

1:4. The readers of Hebrews may have called Jesus Christ by the name, “angel.” This title pictured him as a spiritual being carrying out a few errands for God. Hebrews calls Jesus Christ a Son and recognizes this as a superior title. A Son has a close, personal relationship with the Father. Jesus was much more than a supernatural creature who darted around on mercy missions for God.

1:5. To prove the exalted superiority of the Son, the first of seven Old Testament quotations is used. Christ is viewed as the ultimate aim and goal of all his Old Testament quotations. The first quotation came from Psalm 2:7. The psalm describes the coronation of an Israelite king. Hebrews uses it to proclaim Jesus’ royal dignity in his resurrection and ascension.

The second quotation came from 2 Samuel 7:14. The prophet Nathan passed these words from God to David. They contained a promise that Solomon would build a house for God after David’s death. God promised that he would be David’s father forever and that David would be his son. God did not exhaust these promises in Solomon. Later prophets looked for David to have a greater Son, the Messiah (Mic. 5:2). New Testament writers proclaimed Jesus as the descendant of David who fulfilled this verse (Rom. 1:3). No angel ever had a position as exalted as Jesus.

1:6. The Old Testament does not contain the exact words of this quotation. The idea appears in Psalm 97:7 and in the Greek Old Testament version of Deuteronomy 32:43. In the Old Testament the command involved the worship of God the Father. In Hebrews the Son is linked with the Father by receiving the worship due him. This provided powerful evidence for Jesus’ deity.

This could be a reference to the angels worshiping Jesus at his birth. (Luke 2:8–15). Such angelic worship showed that the Son is superior to angels. He has greater dignity than they.

1:7. What do angels do? Psalm 104:4 is quoted to spotlight their subordinate role. Angels are compared to the natural elements of wind and fire. They did God’s bidding and became his messengers. Angels fulfilled an important but inferior role. We will learn more about their actions in verse 14.

1:8–9. These words come from Psalm 45:6–7. The psalm originally celebrated a royal wedding. The words are so glorious that only God’s messianic king can satisfy their meaning. These words tell us three facts about the role of the Son. Each fact proclaimed his superiority to angels. First, the Son has a throne and is a ruler. No one could say this of an angel. Second, this throne will last for ever and ever. It is eternal. Angels are not eternal, for God created them at a point in time (Ps. 148:2, 5). Third, the Son loves righteousness. Nothing delights God more than for someone to love his righteousness (Ps. 1:1–6; Matt. 5:6).

1:10–12. This, the longest of the seven quotations, comes from Psalm 102:25–27. These words show that God will completely change the created order (2 Pet. 3:11–13). The psalmist was showing that only God provides stability and security. God is anchored like a rock, and we can anchor our lives to this mountain of immobility. Jesus is identified as the Lord who is to be praised.

1:13. The seventh quotation comes from Psalm 110:1. This verse shows that Christ's ascension lifted him to a place of authority and power at the Father's right hand. Jesus claimed that this verse referred to him (Mark 12:36). Although we live at a time when the Son's enemies are not yet a footstool, the New Testament promises the Son's complete victory at the end (1 Cor. 15:24–27).

1:14. In contrast to the authority of God's Son, angels have a servant role. They serve in God's behalf. He gives them orders which they carry out. Their primary duty is to care for believers. The Old Testament promised that angels would deliver believers (Ps. 34:7). The New Testament records angelic rescues (Acts 12:7–10).[1]

[1] Thomas D. Lea, Hebrews, James, vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 8–11.