

# “JESUS, INFINITELY SUPERIOR TO THE ANGELS.”

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

December 25, 2023, 10:00 AM

**Text for the Sermon: Hebrews 1:4-14**

## **Introduction.**

We have spent the past four weeks of Advent considering the Gospel accounts announcing: the coming of the Messiah, the conception of the Messiah and the appearing of the Messiah at His birth. The incarnation of Christ is surrounded by angels from heaven.

We have witnessed the visitation to earth of the archangel Gabriel bearing news of a coming event that is greater than anything the world has ever seen before.

I have stressed the significance and importance of this remarkable inbreaking of the heavenly with the earthly, the eternal with the temporal, the infinite with the finite, the invisible with the visible.

I have pushed against our secular, materialistic, pragmatic, windowless, closed, anti-supernatural world. The abundance of proof is we are not alone, we live on a visited planet, created, sustained and redeemed by the real, living God, who has sent messengers from heaven.

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I haven't had the time to say much about angels so I want to make a number of quick bullet points to keep us from going into a ditch on this topic.

**Angels.** Angels are real and they are involved in the lives of human beings.

Angels are created creatures, created by God on one of the days of creation week. They are not created in the image of God, and they are not eternal, but they are immortal, they never die. They are powerful but not omnipotent. They are spirits but not omnipresent, they can only be in one place at a time. They are intelligent but not omniscient.

Among angels there appear to be several kinds of heavenly beings mentioned in Scripture: seraphim, cherubim, the four living creatures, angels, archangels, and the Angel of the Lord. Gabriel and Michael are the only two named archangels in the Bible.

They can take on the form of human nature. When they are seen by men the response is always one of fear, trembling, terror, scared out of their wits. They are not cute cubby cherubs, nor are they aren't like Clarence.

Angels are of two moral categories, holy/elect angels (I Timothy 5:2) and fallen/evil angels (Jude 6). The fallen angels are irredeemable, there is no mention anywhere of an angel repenting, they have no Savior and therefore no salvation. Once fallen, always fallen. Their number is fixed, they neither reproduce nor die. How many are there? A lot.

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Angels are significant to the Christmas story because Jesus' birth was like none other. Something truly miraculous happened when Jesus took on human flesh as a baby. The presence of angels confirm the miraculous nature of Jesus' conception and birth.

The Christmas story requires us to accept by faith the supernatural, invisible, presence of spiritual beings from somewhere beyond our visible, physical universe.

Angels are important, but their greatest importance is what they point to, what they are a messenger of. This brings us to the importance of our text this morning. Hebrews 1 is the most concentrated, sustained treatment of angels in Scripture.

## Hebrews

The author of Hebrews is addressing a first century audience that had more experience with and knowledge of angels than they did of Jesus. The OT is full of angels, they didn't have trouble believing in angels. But this Jesus is another matter. They didn't have much knowledge of Him.

The author of Hebrews sets out to show how Jesus is superior to the angels. He does this through a series of seven OT passages. The seven OT quotes read almost like a text message thread written by God to the Son, and we are permitted to read the texts. Or to say it another way, this is a conversation God has with His Son and we get to overhear it,

This is God's own testimony concerning the glory and worth of His Son, acknowledging His transcendence and the Father's exaltation in Him.

There are *four evidences* Jesus is superior to the angels.

### **First, Jesus' name is superior to the angel's name, vs. 5**

1:5 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"?

What is the name that is superior to the name of the angels? My Son, Son of God.

When Jesus died and made purification of our sin and ascended to heaven, He was enthroned:

**Philippians 2:9-11** Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him *the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name* of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on

earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus is the eternal Son of the Father, but there is a new dimension of His Sonship because of His incarnation, His sacrificial death and His exaltation to receive His inheritance at the right hand of the Father.

The Father-Son relationship between the two members of the Godhead is unique in all creation. Only Jesus is called the Son of God. No angel has anything close to with kind of relationship with God. No angel is ever addressed with the dignity given to the Son.

*Angels are just angels, Jesus is the Son of God.*

**Second, Jesus is superior in dignity, He is worthy of worship, vs. 6.**

We read Hebrews 1:6 concerning the firstborn, “Let all God's angels worship him.” (Psalm 97:7)

*Firstborn*, means chief one, most important one, of first priority, the superior one.

**Colossians 1:18** He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

Jesus never worships angels or anyone else. We don't worship angels, we worship with angels.

Like the well known prayer from the Book of Common Prayer: “With angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we praise and magnify your glorious name.”

Remember the Scripture that says we are created just a little below the angels. As creatures angels are closer to us and infinitely below Christ in power and nature, they are commanded to worship and serve Him. The one they serve is far greater than them.

The angels serve to point us to worship Jesus. Worship always flows upward, from the lessor to the greater. This of course is why angels never accept any worship, but point up to Jesus.

*Angels are just worshippers, Jesus is the one they worship*

**Third, Jesus is superior in status to the angels, vss. 7-12.**

Quoting from Psalm 45:6-7

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.

Quoting from Psalm 102:26-28

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.”

These verses span all of human history, showing that Christ was before history, before creation, that He created the heavens with its angels and laid the foundations of the earth, and He will outlast creation, one day He will destroy the heavens and the earth.

**Colossians 1:16** For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

Jesus has a superior nature, a superior role, a superior work to that of the angels.

*Angels are merely creatures, Jesus is the creator.*

**Fourth, Jesus is superior in function to the angels, vss. 13-14.**

The function of angels is to serve, the function of the Son is to rule.

Quoted from Psalm 110:1:

13 To which of the angels has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?

No angel ever sits in the presence of God and no angel sits at the right hand of God. But Christ sits there as He awaits the final triumph over His enemies. Jesus is superior because He has the victory, He has won the battle. He has overcome the enemy.

The angels are part of the army, the infantry, the foot soldiers, doing the bidding and command of the commander-in-chief. Jesus far outranks even the highest ranking archangels.

Jesus is superior because of what He has accomplished and what He will bring to completion. Nothing like this is ever said of angels.

1:14 Are they not all *ministering spirits* sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Christ rules, angels serve. Mind you it is a most honorable service they perform, but it is serving nevertheless.

The angels have a great role to play in the grand drama of redemption, but they don't sit at the right hand.

They serve Christ and those who are heirs of salvation, meaning those who belong to Christ. They do whatever benefits His followers.

What a great encouragement to us to hear of so great a love from God that He has given His angels to us to serve our salvation and secure our progress in it. Our salvation is being kept and guarded, our salvation is beyond danger.

God knows our great weaknesses, the infirmity of our flesh. There are forces hostile to us and our salvation. Angels provide an unseen and often unappreciated spiritual assistance, without which we would be destroyed.

We are not alone in this world and we are not defenseless in this hostile world. We are not forgotten in this world, God takes thought of His children in every need.

Our God is a great and mighty God, He is the Lord of Hosts, He has at His command ten thousand times ten thousand mighty angels. He commands His angels concerning us. He sends His *ministering angels* to surround us. God is with you in your battles, in your struggles, in your defeats and victories, in the difficult challenges you face, personal, mental, emotional, physical, family, work, end of life.

As the heirs of salvation we are the most privileged people in the world. All of this is meant to help you trust Jesus more, believe Him more, love Him more, worship Him more.

*Angels are merely ministering servants, Jesus is the king who reigns at God's right hand.*

A cartoon in the New Yorker, a middle-aged businessman, dressed in a suit hanging onto the strap on a crowded commuter train on the way home from another mundane day in the downtown office. As he stands there a bit of a faint smile forms on his face and the caption reads: "at 5:32 PM, Sam Jenkins remembers he was created just a little lower than the angels."

### **Implications and application.**

Jesus is infinitely superior to all the angels. No angel is ever called Son. No angel is exalted and sits at the right hand of the Father in power. No angel is worshipped, no angel is served, but only serves.

Don't be more interested in angels than you are in God. Don't ask angels for help, if you do they will point to Jesus, ask Jesus for help, and if He sends an angel then so be it, but keep your eye on Jesus.

If you believe in angels, if you think angels are amazing, powerful, awesome, then lift up your eyes to Jesus. Make Him superior in your heart and life.

Put Him first, put Him in the supreme place, make Him the priority of your life. More than a husband or wife, more than children or grandchildren, more than a boyfriend or girlfriend.

Jesus is better! “In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9). Jesus is the fullest possible revelation from God to man. God could not have spoken any more plainly. Love and worship and serve Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

He is the Holy One and our only Savior.

**John 1:14** The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

As I love to say on this day every year, now is the time to go to our houses for feasting. Go and enjoy and celebrate your Savior’s birth. For all who believe have a right to be very happy, He gave you the right to be the children of God and that is cause for rejoicing. Go and feast. In the words of Solomon, “Go your way, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart.”

Let your faith give you great joy, for to us a child has been born, a Son has been given and He is Christ the Lord and we have beheld His glory. Glory to God and Amen.

**Prayer:** Holy Father, thank you for thinking of this day before the beginning of time. Thank you for the indescribable gift of the incarnation of your Son. Thank you for making it possible for God and sinners to be reconciled. Thank you that by His birth we no more may die. May those who have been spectators stop holding back, and surrender to the truth and power of your redemption. All glory and praise belongs to you. Gloria in excelsis Deo, glory to God in the highest. Glory to the newborn King. We love you Lord Jesus and we pray in your name. Amen.