

Heb. 1:4-14 Jesus Is Superior to the Angels (part 2)

I hope to finish chapter one of Hebrews three weeks from today. Next week, Kristen and I will be out of town. JB will be preaching. The following week for the Lord's Supper, I want us to spend some time examining ourselves as we consider our church covenant and think about the coming year in our new home groups. Today, we continue with our theme that Jesus is superior to the angels. I have only one truth with some applications to follow.

1. The Son is superior to the angels because of his infinite worth. In vv. 6-7 we see this truth from two perspectives: First, from his exalted position as the "firstborn," and second, from the fact that the angels worship him. **"And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him. Of the angels he says, 'He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.'**" Now, it is important to remember that the author is taking important truths from the OT and even quoting them to support the fact that the Son is superior to the angels. The first is most likely from the Song of Moses in Deut. 32. It comes at the end of Moses' life as Joshua is getting ready to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. And Moses begins his song by worshipping God, saying, **"Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak . . . For I will proclaim the name of the Lord: ascribe greatness to our God"** (32:1-3) And then at the very end of the song he says, **"Rejoice with him, O heavens; bow down to him, all gods . . ."** (v. 43). We also see the same words from Psalm 97:7 which says, **"All who worship images are put to shame, those who boast in idols— worship him, all you gods!"** Now, the word for "gods" is "*elohim*" which is often translated as "angels." In fact, in the Greek OT, this is the translation from which the author of Hebrews cites. The truth is clear from the OT: **"WORSHIP GOD!"** He is the Lord. He is worthy. And we worship Him alone. Well, In Hebrews the author uses these verses to say the same thing about the Son, in regard to his superiority over the angels. With this in mind, let's take a closer look at v. 6, particularly the word "firstborn." Last week, it was "begotten," this week it is "firstborn."

There are many (modern day Jehovah Witnesses) who use the word "firstborn" to prove that Jesus is a created being. Now, when thinking about this, we know that Jesus was "born" into this world. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and carried in the womb and born from his mother, Mary. This is the incarnation. These things are true! But, the word "firstborn" in this context is NOT referring to Jesus as a created being, but to his position of rank, namely his superior rank to the angels. It was common in that day (and today) for the firstborn to be given a higher position of authority than the other children. It doesn't mean the other are not "born," for they are also children. But, their position is not that of the first born.

We see this truth in the OT. In one instance God says to Moses, **"Tell Pharaoh, Israel is my firstborn son"** (Exod. 4:22). Now, Israel is not literally, God's son. But, he says this to show Pharaoh their position, compared to the other nations. In another place, referring to King David, the Psalmist says, **"And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth."** David is not even the firstborn son in his family. But, as the KING, he is called the "firstborn."

Concerning Christ, in Col. 1:15 we see the same word in reference to creation. **"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation."** In Rom. 8:29 we see this word in reference to his resurrection. **"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."** Also in

Col. 1:18: **“And 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.”** (See also Rev. 1:5; Heb. 12:23)

One of the reasons I believe JW's and others see him as “created” is because they only emphasize his humanity, and as a man, he WAS a man. But, this is all they see. And, it is true that, in his incarnation he was **“made for a little while, lower than the angels . . .”** (2:7). And this was necessary in order for our redemption (2:9-10). However, as the Son, he is supreme. His position is one of preeminence, as we will see as we continue in this chapter. And because of superiority, as evidenced in his exaltation, He is worthy of worship. We see this clearly in the 2nd part of vv. 6-7 as he is compared to the angels. In v. 6 we read: **“Let all God’s angels worship him.”** And then in 7: **“Of the angels he says, He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.”**

This is a profound statement and truth about the person of the Son, as compared to the angels. AND, as compared to all of creation. Let me ask, *“Who is worthy of worship?”* It is God, and God alone! I think of the words Job when he considers the holiness of God. He says **“Behold, God puts no trust in his holy ones, and the heavens are not pure in his sight . . .”** And **“Behold, even the moon is not bright, and the stars are not pure in his eyes . . .”** (Job 15:15; 25:5). And Ps. 89:5-7, **“Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones! For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD? Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD, a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around him?”** (Ps. 89:5-7). There is only ONE worthy of worship, God, who is the creator and Lord of All. And here the angels are commanded to worship the Son! After they all, they are creatures. V. 7 says, **“He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame or fire.”** In the OT, often God sends angels to minister to his people. And when someone tries to worship them, what do they say, *“Do not worship me. I am merely a servant.”* But, it is not so with the Son.

We see this truth throughout the Scriptures. At the birth of Jesus the angels worship him. At various times people worship him. Do you remember Thomas? After seeing the resurrected Christ, putting his hand in his side and seeing his hands, he says, *“My Lord and my God!”* (John 20:28). What about Peter? After fishing all night, and catching NOTHING, Jesus said, *“cast your nets on the other side of the boat.”* And there were instantly so many fish that when they pulled them into the boat, it began to sink. What did Peter say, **“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”** (Luke 5:8). On another occasion, Jesus rebuked a storm that would have surely killed them all. And the disciples in the boat *“worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God”* (Matt. 14:33). In fact, it is for this reason the Jewish religious leaders want him crucified. In John 5:18 we read: **“This is why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.”** To worship the Son is to worship God. And today, we worship the Son, who is the “firstborn,” the ONE who assumes, and who is given the highest of positions.

I would like to finish our time today with some comments and applications.

Application: At the end of the day, we worship the Son because God says so. We obey because God says so. He is the Lord! We are not! God commands the angels to worship the Son. V. 5: **“For to which of the angels did God ever say.”** And v. 6 **“And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says.”** And in v. 7 **“Of the angels he says.”** And then in v. 8: **“But of the son, he says.”** From the beginning God spoke. He told Adam and Eve what he required of them. But what did they do? They followed the lie of Satan, who tempted them to question the command of God. The reason there is sin in this world is because Adam and his kin (sinners, all of us) did not and do not obey the command of God. And in Psalm 2 God says to the nations, **“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled.”** Today, to worship God is to obey the Son, and this because He has said it.

Let me also point out that our mission as a church is based upon the authority of the Son, given to Him after his death and resurrection. In Matt. 28:18-20 He says, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**

Application: We worship the Son, not merely because of WHO He is, but because of WHAT He has done. This is the context of our entire passage. Jesus is exalted because of his work as mediator. You often hear me speak of the PERSON and WORK of the Son (truths abundantly clear in the Book of Hebrews). In his PERSON, he is worthy of worship because He is the SON of GOD. In essence He is the same as the Father. For this alone, He is to be worshiped. There is no one higher to be worshipped.

However, today, as sinners, we are able to worship him because of WHAT He has done. The context of this passage is the exaltation of the SON, BECAUSE of what he has done as mediator between God and sinful man (1 Tim. 2:5). We cannot worship the Father unless God the Son, takes on flesh (incarnation), lives a sinless life, lays down his life as an acceptable sacrifice on the cross, rises again, and ascends to the Father. This is why Jesus says to the woman at the well that **“the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him”** (John 4:23).

Application: As “firstborn” He is founder of a new humanity. Last week, we considered the term “begotten.” Jesus is “begotten,” not made, not created (See the Nicene Creed). The emphasis of the word “begotten” is on Jesus’ special, unique, relationship to the Father. But, the emphasis of the word “firstborn” is on the relationship of the Son to all of creation. It is a “NEW” relation. And this relationship comes about because of his work as mediator. What does 2 Cor. 5:17 say: **“If anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation.”** This means we are part of a new family. Today, because of what Christ has done, we are called sons of God. And by way of adoption, we are brothers and sisters with Christ. We are not like him in that He is the only “begotten” son. He is the Son by right. We are sons according to adoption. We were “children of wrath,” and “children of Satan.” He was not! But, as the “firstborn,” the One who is given the highest of positions because of his work as mediator, we are the children of God.

Application: As “firstborn” He is Lord of a new creation. It is not only us, as sinners who are reconciled to God through Christ, but also the entire world will also be reconciled. We wait for a new creation. Rom. 8:18-22 says: **“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.”**

Application: As “firstborn” He is head of the church. Eph. 1:22: **“And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”** Col. 1:18: **“And 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.”**

Let me finish this morning by making a distinction between us and the angels concerning the worship of the Son. It is interesting here that God says, **“Let all the angels worship him.”** But, if we think about, haven't they always worshiped Him as the eternal Son of God? Yes, they have. They were created to worship Him. They are sinless and they have always worshiped Him, which is common to their nature. But HERE, God gives another command for the angels to worship Him. What is the difference? Now, they are commanded to worship Him as mediator, as the ONE who laid down his life as a sacrifice for sinners, rose from the dead and now is exalted to the right hand of the majesty on high. In this regard, Christ did not lay down his life for them, but for us. The ONLY reason we worship Christ today is because of his work, his incarnation and laying down his life and rising again. Today, the world does not worship Christ! To them, the cross is folly! But, we worship Him. This is why the Bible says that the angels “long to look into such things” (1 Pet. 1:12).

Today, Jesus is worth of worship.