

Jesus is better than the angels

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 18 July 2021

Preacher: James Ross

[0 : 0 0] We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. So, let's begin this evening with a question that really covers everything that we will think about today as it refers to Jesus and the angels. And the question is, are we too easily satisfied? I was thinking about this, actually, on holiday. We were doing a little bit of crazy golf in a nice wee seaside town. And just beside the crazy golf, there was tennis courts. And there was a couple of young guys hitting a tennis ball around. And they were pretty decent. They had good power, good precision, good spin, all that kind of stuff, getting some good rallies. The guys were good. But it was the same time as Wimbledon was going on. I was thinking, these guys are good, but it'd be really weird to kind of take a seat and sit down and watch them, perhaps even to pay money. You know, they were good, but they were no Novak Djokovic. Sometimes we can be easily impressed and easily satisfied. Perhaps that's something we remember from our childhood experience as boys and girls. Perhaps you have something or you had something. Maybe you can think about a toy that you had once upon a time and you thought, life can't get better than this thing. And then it does. So, that got me thinking sort of nostalgically. The first computer I ever had was the ZX Spectrum with a whopping 48k of RAM. And I loved that computer. Until we got Sega, until we got Sony. And now we have a Switch. And I really wouldn't trade back. I doubt anybody would.

Same growing up in the old-fashioned days of regular block Lego. But then in the late 80s and into the 90s came Space Lego. And again, wow, what a revolution. And you wouldn't want to go back. To the old days. There was nothing wrong with the old. But when you've seen something better, you're never going to be satisfied with the something that is less. Now, the message of our author to these Christians here is that when it comes to religion, when it comes to worship, we are not to be too easily satisfied, we are not to think that we can stop with, in their case, honoring the angels. Rather, we must see Jesus as greater so that we would never drift and depart from him to something less than him. Why does the author here focus on angels, though? I guess for us, it might be hard for us to understand what all the fuss is about, perhaps. Unless, I suppose, we go to a bookshop and we look at the religion and spirituality section. And there you will find, without a shadow of a doubt, lots of books on angels. And there's a great interest in angels, fascination with the heavenly beings. And still in our culture, we speak of guardian angels watching over us. When people die, you might hear people say that the loved one has gone to be with the angels. So there's still that sense of angels as part of our culture. But I suspect there's not anybody here who is tempted to replace Jesus with angels in our honor, in our worship. But for these new believers, it seems that they were in a different situation. So they knew their Bibles, and they knew that angels were the most glorious created beings. You read through the Old Testament, and whenever angels show up, they show up with power and glory, and you often find people falling on their faces without fear and awe. They also know that angels have been chosen to be God's messengers. Indeed, it was widely understood that the law came through angels. But our author here recognizes that this honor, an undue honor that's being given to the angels, it seems, is part of that drift back to the old ways of religion. Remember, this is a group who are facing opposition and persecution because they've become Christians from Judaism. So here it seems like this honor of angels might be part of that drift back to the old ways. And so the author wants to encourage them to persevere in their new faith by showing, again, the greater glory of Jesus. That there is no comparison in glory between the angels, the angels, and the angels as good as they are, and Jesus, the Son of God. But I guess because this is kind of obscure, this topic of angels, we need to think, what's the point of connection for us this evening? Well, I think if we go back to the question of worship that we were thinking about this morning, what gets, who or what gets our honor? Where does our heart go? Where do we look for hope and for help? Our temptation might be the same as these early Jewish

Christians. That temptation to want to place our trust in something less than Jesus, in reality, in the nitty-gritty of life. Perhaps to place our trust and our faith in another person or a political institution, perhaps in a vaccine or in a religious system to elevate a good thing to such a level that it becomes for us a God thing, in which case we too would miss the greater glory of Jesus. And so this little section, although it's all about angels and we maybe struggle to connect, it's a reminder that we too can drift away from the proper center of our worship. We can drift away from obedience and love for Jesus, and we too can give our heart to created things rather than our Creator and Savior. There's a root of temptation towards distraction, at least, and idolatry at worst here. And so the author's desire is to show Jesus is better than the angels, and by extension Jesus is better than any created thing. So again, we'd be fixing our hearts on His infinite glory. So there's four ways that our author does this for us. First of all, in verses 4 and 5, we discover that Jesus has a better name than the angels.

Now we read that the Son became as much superior to the angels as the name He has inherited is superior to theirs. Shakespeare asked the question, what's in a name? A first century Jewish person would never ask that question because a name, a person's name, reflected their nature. So what's the name that Jesus has been given? The name is Son of God. Last week we thought about Jesus, the Son of God, being heir to the world and sharing the quality of godness with the Father, equal in glory with God the Father. Now that's not true of any of the angels or any other created being. So Jesus is, to use the language of Hebrews, is much superior to the angels. And again, our author is going to draw on the Old Testament, their Old Testament, to say the evidence of the Old Testament points clearly to the fact that Jesus is better. So we've got this extended set of quotations, seven quotations, seven Old Testament passages. Significant because seven is the language of completion and perfection, and it's all piling up this evidence from their Old Testament to make the point that Jesus the Son is better than the angels they are being tempted to at least hold as being equal with Jesus. So in verse 5 we find that there are two Old Testament references to make clear that Jesus has a better name than the angels. The first is from Psalm 2. You are my Son. Today I have become your Father. So if you were here or listening last

[8 : 40] Sunday morning, you'll have heard Davi preach for us from Psalm 2. Psalm 2 reminds us that God's chosen King is God's Son. Now that language of the King is God's Son, it was used of David and Solomon, but never in this complete and perfect way that Psalm 2 is describing. And then we come to the baptism of Jesus and the transfiguration of Jesus, and we hear the Father announcing, this is my Son, and I love Him.

And Jesus is this absolute Son and King, rules over all the nations in a way that David or Solomon never did. And then the second quotation comes from, well, 2 Samuel 7 or 1 Chronicles 17 as we read earlier.

And this is the covenant that God makes with David. And if you think back to what we read, there was that promise that God would love David's son. This promised son would rule as king forever. Now again, in part, it's a reference to Solomon, because God did love and honor Solomon, but his rule was not the same. It wasn't as extensive, and it certainly wasn't eternal. This son is Jesus. This eternal reign is absolutely true of Jesus. So here we're being reminded that Jesus, God's Son, rules as God's King over all people for all time, therefore, He is far superior to the angels.

Now notice verse 4. It's important because I think it's possible to misunderstand. Verse 4 begins, so He became as much superior to the angels. And so we need to ask ourselves, what time is in view?

[10 : 36] And is this implying that there was a time when Jesus was less than the angels? Was there a time when He was inferior, and then all of a sudden He becomes superior? Well, this is not saying that there was any time, any point in eternity when Jesus was less than God. Rather, this has in focus the time when Jesus, as the God-man, is exalted to the position of honor and glory that He's just spoken about in verse 3. Jesus, after providing purification for sin, sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. And that sitting, that being enthroned, is what is in view. Mike Kruger, in his helpful little commentary on Hebrews, brings to mind coming-of-age ceremonies. Lots of traditional cultures around the world have these coming-of-age ceremonies. We remember being in South Africa and driving through townships, and you'd see little huts where boys of a certain age would go, and they'd spend a week, and it was the week where they became men. So they would come back to the village, and they were all of a sudden inducted into adulthood. They came back to a different position within their family. Now, think about what Paul says of Jesus in Romans chapter 1 and verse 4.

It says that Jesus, through the Spirit of holiness, was appointed the Son of God in power by His resurrection from the dead. So the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus is when He is inducted to this royal position as the God-man far above the angels and deserving all worship. The basic point, then, is that we ought to give Jesus the honor His name deserves. Doubtless, that's something that we were taught as children, and no doubt that's something as parents we look to teach our children, to respect their teachers, to show proper manners for important guests, give people the respect they deserve. Well, since Jesus has this better name, this name above all other names, we should worship Him alone. To use the language of Psalm 2, we should kiss the Son. We should gladly submit to Jesus as Lord. And to think about the context of Hebrews, we should persevere in our faith, persevere, keep going in our worship of Jesus, recognizing Jesus as the Savior who sits on the throne of the universe, and He is ruling for us, and He is praying for us, and He is continuing to love and to keep His people. So Jesus has a better name than the angels. So that's the first point that He wants to make. But then He goes on to say in verse 6, Jesus receives the worship of angels. If you want to show that Jesus is superior, then where do the angels worship? And the point is that they worship Jesus. Verse 6, and again, when God brings His firstborn into the world, He says, let all God's angels worship Him. Jesus is, to use this language, God's firstborn.

And again, this is not saying there was a time in eternity when Jesus was born. It's not saying there was a time when Jesus didn't exist, and then He was born, and He became the Son of God. No, the idea of firstborn is that Jesus shares absolutely the Father's authority. Jesus shares the glory of the Father. Jesus enjoys His Father's love in a special way, in a way that the angels don't receive. Jesus does.

And Jesus, the firstborn Son, receives the worship of angels. Angels in the Bible, as we've already said, are these most glorious created beings. The first response of people typically was to fall on their faces, but these angels, in the presence of Jesus, they worship Him. That's why we began with Isaiah 6, and that vision that Isaiah receives of God's throne room. What do we find there? We find the angels worshipping God, praising Him day and night, and they're so in awe of His glory and His holiness that they cover their faces before His majesty. And remember that the Lord of the Old Testament is Jesus. What's true of the God of the Old Testament is true of Jesus.

[15 : 39] And there's a great passage towards the end of our Bibles, Revelation 19, where John has been receiving all these wonderful visions of the end of time and how Jesus will win the ultimate victory.

He receives a message from this angel, and he bows down to worship the angel. And the angel says, don't do that. I'm a fellow servant. Worship God. For it is the spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus. The spirit bears testimony to Jesus as the one who deserves worship, because Jesus is God.

It seems that perhaps these readers, these first readers, were tempted towards worshipping the angels, or perhaps equating Jesus with the angels. They're both messengers, so they're kind of equal.

But the author wants to make the point that the angels are in absolute awe of Jesus. They are mesmerized by Him. They know Jesus is not one of their equals. The point being, don't choose the lesser over the greater. Give praise to whom praise is due. The angels understand that praise is due to Jesus.

And I think that's so significant, again, for our church services as we gather. You know, the angels are servants. The angels are servants, and so are we as the people of God. And just as the angels, as servants, worship God, give praise to Jesus, so we gather to do the same thing, to leave lesser things behind, to focus on the greater glory of our God and Savior.

[17 : 26] So Jesus receives the worship of angels. And then, to push things still further, our author reminds us that Jesus rules the angels. Verses 7 to 9, and then 13 and 14. So verse 7, in speaking of the angels, God says, He makes His angels spirits, and His servants flames of fire. But about the sun, He says, Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever. We get a glimpse into the job description of an angel in chapter 1 and the beginning of chapter 2 of Hebrews. So we discover here in verse 7 that they are servants of God. In verse 14, we're told that the angels are ministering spirits from God.

And then in chapter 2 and verse 2, we're told that they are messengers from God. And the message they bring is binding, or the message they brought was binding. So they are powerful, they're

glorious, they're appointed by God. And we need to hold those as true, but we also need to recognize that they are also obedient servants. But what about how does God speak about Jesus the Son? And that's where the author uses Psalm 45 and attributes it to Jesus and says, Jesus the Son is the King.

This Psalm that was in part, again, about human kings, but was understood to be messianic, pointing forward to God's true and final king. And did you notice in verse 8 that it says that Jesus the Son is God. About the Son, He says, Your throne, O God, will last forever.

Again, we're being reminded from Scripture that we are to understand Jesus as God, and therefore far superior to the angels or any other created being. Now, what kind of king is Jesus?

Verse 8, we understand that His rule will last forever and ever. He is the eternal king. We understand that His rule will be marked by justice. A scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. We discover that He has the proper affections. He loves what is good. He hates what is evil. You've loved righteousness and hated wickedness. And we discover Jesus the King has given the place of honor by God. Therefore, God, your God has set you above your companions. Again, no angel, no person, no institution, no king, no church compares with Jesus. There is one truth here, that the angels are created servants, and created servants should worship, honor, submit to, show loyalty to their king.

[20 : 45] And by extension, so should we. There is to here a challenge, a reminder. Verse 13, to which of the angels did God ever say, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. There is that solemn reminder that Jesus is the king who will have the victory. He will judge and defeat all those who oppose His rule. And so, the challenge is for us to ask the question, have I turned from sin? Have I bowed my knee to worship, to honor Jesus as king? Have I seen His love and goodness in being willing to come to earth, to die, to save me, to forgive my sin, to bring me to God?

So, there's a challenge implied here, but there's also a wonderful comfort at the end of this chapter in verse 14. We read, are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve who? Sent to serve those who will inherit salvation. So, here's what's going on here. The king of the universe, who is Jesus, he sends his angels on their mission to minister, to meet the needs of his people. You and I, if we're Christians today, our king moves heaven and earth. Our king sends his angels to show us his love. That's the kind of king we have. Jesus rules the angels. And in case we were in any doubt about the supremacy of Jesus, that his name is better, our author concludes his arguments by showing that Jesus made the angels. Jesus created the angels. Perhaps first century Jewish Christians were wondering, is Jesus just another angel? Are they equal in worth? Well, his last point proves it beyond doubt.

All through the Bible, we understand that the angels are powerful, created beings. But what about Jesus? Look at verse 10. Speaking of Jesus, he also says, In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.

The God of Psalm 102 is Jesus. The powerful creator is Jesus. The son of verse 8 is the Lord of creation.

[23 : 29] And what we discover about this Lord of creation is that he is unchangeable. They will perish, but you remain. You remain the same and your years will never end. He is eternal.

He is the king. So, as we bring this all together, now we can see that our author is wanting to make one thing abundantly clear, that we should not be too easily satisfied, that you and I must see and respond to the infinite glory of Jesus. When I was a boy, I loved my little spectrum computer. But would I work on it now? Would I play on it now? I probably couldn't even if I wanted to, but it would seem so ludicrous because the new is so much better.

We never want to go back. The author of the Hebrews is making clear to us that the glory of Jesus is to be found on every page of our Bible, New Testament and Old, so that we wouldn't leave him behind, wouldn't become complacent about him, be tempted to make him of equal in importance with anyone other than God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. We're being reminded that angels and people, we are servants, and we're called to honor and obey our glorious King. We're being reminded that he is incomparable. His greatness is on a different scale, that the angels as great and powerful and good as they are. At heart, our author wants to call us away from anything that would distract us, every idol that we'd be tempted to make in our lives, to worship the Son as our Savior King. Let's stand together and give thanks for Jesus.

Lord, our God, we thank you for this part of the letter to the Hebrews, reminding us over and over of the supremacy, the supreme value and glory and worth of Jesus, your Son, your King, the one who rules, and the one who never changes, the one who created all things, the one who loves his people, the one who uses the angels to minister to his people, the one who at the end of time will be shown to be absolute King with no rivals, establishing his perfect eternal kingdom, the one who trusts in Jesus, the one who trusts in Jesus, and will live in perfect peace and joy.

[26 : 49] Lord, please will you take from our hearts all those things that would distract us from Jesus, help us to turn our back on those idols that we create in our hearts instead of Jesus, us. And rather, may we be known for full-hearted worship, because we recognize he is glorious, that with the help of your Spirit, by your grace, we would give to him the praise and honor that is due to his almighty name. Amen.

Now we'll finish our time hearing a hymn that helps us to think more on this theme, the hymn is Crown Him with Many Crowns.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. People, man. Amen. Amen.

All music but its own Awake my soul and sing Of Him who died to be Your Savior and your matchless King Through all eternity Crown Him the Lord of life Triumphant from the grave Who rose victorious from the strife For those He came to save His glories now we sing Who died and raised on high Who died eternal life To bring and lives that death may die

[29 : 16] Crown Him the Lord of love Who shows His hands and sigh Those wounds yet visible above In beauty glorified No angel in the sky Can't fully bear the sight But downward bends His burning high That mystery so bright Crown Him the Lord of love Crown Him the Lord of peace His kingdom is at hand From pole to pole

And Christ rule every land A city stands on high His glory it displays And there the nations And there the nations hold In joyful hymns of praise The Lord of love The Lord of love Crown Him the Lord of peace Lord of years The Lord of years The Lord of years And there the Lord of love And there the Lord of love And there the Lord of love All hail All hail Redeemer All hail Redeemer For you have died for me Your praise shall never, never fail

Through all eternity All hail Redeemer All hail Redeemer For you have died for me Your praise shall never, never fail Through all eternity We stand to receive the benediction It's a benediction that comes from the end of the book of Hebrews Now may the God of peace Who through the blood of the eternal covenant Brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus That great shepherd of the sheep Equip you with everything good for doing his will And may he work in us what is pleasing to him Through Jesus Christ To whom be glory forever and ever

Amen