



4: Better Than Any Angel

"When He had by Himself purged our sins, [He] sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say:

"You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"?

And again:

"I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"?

But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says:

"Let all the angels of God worship Him."

And of the angels He says:

"Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire."

But to the Son He says:

"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;
A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Your kingdom.
You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
With the oil of gladness more than Your companions."

And:

"You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth,
And the heavens are the work of Your hands.
They will perish, but You remain;
And they will all grow old like a garment;
Like a cloak You will fold them up,
And they will be changed.
But You are the same,
And Your years will not fail."

But to which of the angels has He ever said:

"Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"?

Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

Hebrews 1:4 – 14

Jesus is God's final word and He's a word worth listening to. Jesus is worth listening to because He's the God appointed heir of absolutely everything. More than that, Jesus made everything, and He holds it all together. He's worth listening to because He's the exact image of God Himself, indeed He is God: He possess every attribute God possess to it's fullest extent. And, on top of all that, now, having cleansed us of our sin once and for all, He's enthroned at the right hand of the Father in glory.

Having told us all that about Jesus, the writer of the Book of Hebrews uses the rest of chapter 1 to prove that Jesus is better than any angel. That might seem like an odd idea to take up at this point but remember, he was writing his book for believers who had come from a Jewish background and the Jews believed that angels played an important part in the giving of the Law (take a look at Deuteronomy 33:2, Acts 7:53, Galatians 3:19). That's why, wanting to show them that the word that has come from God in Jesus is superior even to the Law, the writer wants to be sure his readers are convinced that Jesus' status way exceeds that of angels.

The Fact Stated

First, in verse 4, he states the fact then, in the rest of that chapter, he proves it with quotations from the Old Testament.

The words "having become" might lead you to think that there was a time when Jesus was lower than the angels. Jesus has always been better than any angel but when He became a man He temporarily took on a lower status. Now, enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty on high (verse 3), He is far, far superior in status, dignity and power. The writer will come back to that idea in chapter 2.

How much better than the angels has Jesus become? By as much "as He has inherited a more excellent name than they". Remember, inherited means nothing more than, "He has come into possession of..." and remember too that a name is more than a label. A person's name is shorthand for everything he is: his glory. So, Jesus is better than the angels by as much as His present glory (enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty on high) exceeds theirs.

The Fact Proven

Now the proof, and it comes in the shape of seven quotes from the Old Testament, all of them, you'll notice, words spoken by God Himself.

He's The Son Of God: Angel's Aren't

The first is Psalm 2:7 (and even the Jews recognised Psalm 2 as being messianic) where God declares to His Messiah, "You are My Son". Don't be waylaid by questions like, what day does God mean by "today"? or, when was Jesus begotten? The point to get is that God has declared Jesus to be His Son and that is confirmed with another quote: this one from 2 Samuel.

These words of 2 Samuel 7:14 were first spoken to David. They refer to a descendant whose kingdom and throne will endure for ever. The Messiah king will be known as God's Son.

Now, of which of the angels did God ever say the like of that? Angels are sometimes known in the Old Testament as sons of God, but always collectively, only Jesus is said to be *the* Son of God.

Angel's Worship Him

Next, in verse 6, we have a quote from Psalm 97:7 and the point to get is that angels worship Jesus, and if He is worshipped by angels, surely He must be superior to them.

People argue over the words, "when He again brings the firstborn into the world." Do they refer to Jesus birth or to His second coming? It's not clear and it really doesn't matter because there are lots of references to angels worshipping both at Jesus first coming and His second.

"Firstborn" is about Jesus' standing with God, as in Psalm 89:27 where God says of David (and by implication of his descendant the Messiah) "I also will make him my firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth."

Angels Are Servants: He's The King

A quote from Psalm 104:4 (verse 7) establishes that angels are servants who obey God's commands and a quote from Psalm 45:6 – 7 (verses 8 – 9) sets up a contrast. Psalm 45 is another Psalm that is clearly messianic. In it the Father speaks to His Son, the Messiah, and says: "Thy throne O God, is forever and ever." There can be no doubt that by using this Psalm the writer is saying boldly and clearly that Jesus is

God, the Most High. What's more, He will reign forever, He will rule with perfect righteousness, appointed by God and exalted above every other king. In contrast to angels who were created to serve, Jesus, Himself God, is the King of kings.

He's The Creator: Angels Are Mere Onlookers

The writer's sixth quote (verses 10 – 12) is from Psalm 102:25 – 27. In the book of Psalms these words were applied to God — Yahweh — but here, without any qualification or apology, they're applied to Jesus. The quote establishes His part in creation and His eternity. Angels are created beings who were mere spectators when the foundation of the earth was laid, Jesus, who has always existed and who will always exist, is the Creator!

He's Seated At God's Right Hand: Angels Go Out To Serve

In verse 13 the writer quotes Psalm 110:1. Psalm 110 is another messianic Psalm that is frequently quoted in relation to Jesus for it unmistakably refers to Him.

We already know that Jesus is seated at the right hand of God but here another thought is added: "till I make Your enemies Your footstool". Jesus will reign with absolute power: no enemy will ever again threaten His authority. So said God to His Son. Did He ever say the like of that to an angel? No, once again we are told, this time in the writer's own words, angels are servants. They are all servants of God who, at His command, serve the interests of "those who will inherit salvation"

- ◆ *How would you use these verses to help someone see that Jesus is God and to show what it means that He is?*
- ◆ *In what ways will what you have learned from these verses make a practical difference for you in everyday life?*
- ◆ *What do we mean when we say that a Psalm is a messianic Psalm?*