

Superior to the Angels

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[0 : 00] Well, tonight, we're going to talk about angels.

And it's going to come right out of Hebrews chapter 1.! I'm going to start reading in verse 4 and keep going until I run out of angels. Verse 5, having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

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.

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.

But of the Son, He says, Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.

[1 : 18] Therefore, God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness beyond Your companions. And You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of Your hands.

They will perish, but You remain. They will all wear out like a garment. 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. And to which of the angels has He said, Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet?

We're studying the epistle to the Hebrews, the superiority of Christ in all things and over all things, including angels.

Now, as disappointing and as surprising this may be to you, we're not going to cover each of those verses tonight, but they will be covered eventually. I said in our first lesson on the epistle to the Hebrews, that during this study we would be drinking some milk, but primarily we would be making efforts to consume the meat of biblical truth.

[2 : 44] This evening and the subsequent evenings, we're going to feast on some meat. By way of reminder, this book was written to Hebrews.

It can be argued that the focus of the book was to new Hebrew Christians in a church somewhere outside of Israel, perhaps Greece.

At this point in our archaeological knowledge, we cannot be certain to the location. There are also passages addressed to the Jews in the Hebrew church that were not believers.

Like churches in even our day, there was a mixture of believers and unbelievers, or what Jesus referred to in the Gospels as wheat and tares. The message the author is trying to convey is that the new covenant is better than the old covenant.

Now we have to be cautious here, okay? The old covenant was not wrong. It was God's Word. It's not wrong.

[3 : 52] But it was incomplete until Christ came in the incarnation. The truth is that Jesus Christ was a much better priest than were the hundreds and thousands of earthly priests that served in the tabernacle and later the temple in Jerusalem.

Jesus is a much better mediator than was the earthly high priest. And the earthly high priest's role was to be a mediator.

Jesus was much better. The role of the mediator is to stand between God and man. Christ was superior to the earthly high priest as the mediator because he was sinless.

Didn't have to deal with any personal sin, as does the earthly high priest. When the earthly high priest offered an atoning sacrifice on the day of atonement, he had to first sacrifice for his own sin. Then he had to sacrifice for the sins of his family. And then finally, for the sins of the nation. Jesus never had to do that, obviously.

[5 : 24] Jesus was obviously superior to the earthly priests in that he is the final priest. It's not going to be anymore. And he is also the final sacrifice.

So he's the high priest and the sacrifice. And that is why we say Jesus is superior in all things. We saw this fact in our examination of the first three verses of the book.

There we learn that Christ is superior to all things because of his heirship, his creatorship, his radiance, his being, his administration, his sacrifice, and his exaltation.

We call those the seven excellencies of Christ. Now as we move deeper in our study, we learn that Christ is also superior to angels.

And I dare say that's probably not very earth-shattering news to Gentiles living in the 21st century in North America. I mean, it makes sense.

[6 : 35] It probably didn't make sense to Gentiles in the 1st century or the 21st century. But to Jews back then, and to some Jews perhaps even now, this information was very moving.

For some, maybe a little disturbing even. Now we live out our lives in the 20th and now 21st century. We've seen through the developments in medicine the amazing complexity of the human body.

The human body is much more complex than plants and animals. Man is far superior to any material creations on the earth. But there are created beings that are actually in the hierarchy of things higher than man.

We learn in Hebrews 2.9 that when Jesus came to earth in the incarnation, the very Son of God, He was made for a time a little lower than the angels.

It's a staggering thought. Now we do know there was once a rebellion of angels, not all of them, a third of them.

[7 : 55] But there was a rebellion of angels in heaven when the chief angel, himself a created being by the name of Lucifer, decided he could establish his throne to be higher than God's throne.

May I suggest we don't ever do that? I think that goes without saying, but we don't ever do that. But amazingly, many of the angels threw in with Lucifer.

You know, I wanted to ask them, what are you thinking? They thought Lucifer was going to win.

Now we don't know how many angels threw in with him. It could number in the millions or it could number in the billions.

Those that were on Lucifer's side fell with Lucifer and became demons. And they're still alive.

Angels don't die. And Lucifer was renamed Satan. In one event, in the ninth chapter of Revelation, which is yet future, some 200 million demons participated in the killing of perhaps a billion human beings on earth.

[9 : 26] So there's a gaggle of fallen angels called demons. Now when Lucifer and his horde of angels fell, they were cast out of heaven.

And guess where they landed? Planet Earth. They're here. After the angelic beings remaining in heaven, after the fallen angels were cast out, there were holy angels still there.

And they are now, thank goodness, incapable of sinning against God. Not going to be another rebellion. In heaven.

These godly angels are strong. They are powerful. They are wise. They do not experience the infirmities of men.

They were made by God before He made us. Adam and Eve in the garden. They are higher than man in the hierarchy and certainly higher than fallen man.

[10 : 48] There are nearly 300 references to angels in the Bible. angels in the Bible. So what is their purpose? What exactly are angels and what do they do?

Angels were created as spirit beings. as such, they do not have flesh and bones in the sense that we do.

Now we do know that angels have bodies and they can even take on the appearance of a human. And many times we've seen that throughout the Bible.

They can appear in human form. There is even a warning issued to us in the book of Hebrews chapter 13 concerning angels. 13.2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Now to my knowledge I've never entertained an angel that I'm aware of. Angels are also capable of appearing in other forms. And speaking of angels Matthew had this to report in the 28th chapter verse 3 and 4 His appearance talking about an angel His appearance was like lightning and His

clothing white as snow and for fear of Him the guards trembled and became like dead men.
[12 : 25] That's the angel that was there when Jesus resurrected. The guy's passed away passed out. In full context of the Bible we learn that angels are very intelligent.

Very much so. We also know that angels have emotions. In Luke 15.12 it is reported that angels rejoice when sinners are saved.

I love that passage. When a sinner is saved the angels of heaven rejoice. Can you imagine that scene? Can you just imagine it?

Angels don't marry. They don't procreate. Most theologians believe that angels are all created at the same moment by the Lord Jesus.

Jesus. And they base that on a reading of the second chapter of Colossians among others.

Colossians 2.16 For by Him all things were created in heaven and on earth visible and invisible whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities.

[13 : 41] All things were created through Him and for Him and He is before all things and in Him all things hold together. There is no mention in the Bible of God over the eons of time adding to the ranks of angels.

They're not in heaven being created. They're not increasing. Apparently angels have individual identities and I would guarantee you that Jesus has a name that He's given each one of them and He knows them by name.

I promise you that. I mean Jesus has a name for every star in the universe and He knows that star by its name. I guarantee He knows the angels. Angels do not die.

So in that regard they were created as eternal beings. angels are not annihilated. Their molecules or whatever they're made up of don't just disappear someday.

But angels could and indeed did fall. The book of Revelation reports that one third of the angelic fell when Lucifer fell.

[15 : 03] That's just staggering. And I think that has a lot to do with that verse in Revelation where it says and there was war in heaven. That just staggers me. I don't know if you ever preached on that pastor.

I don't think I could. There was war. What does that mean? There was war in heaven. And when those guys and the angels fell in heaven they ceased being holy angels.

They can never recover that. There's no repentance among angels. demons. And they became demons and they will be for the rest of eternity.

And eventually spend eternity in the lake of fire. Eventually. Angels were created before mankind. How many of them were created is unknown. But many good theologians believe the number could be in the trillions. Even after the disobedient angels fell those remaining faithful to the Lord probably numbered in the trillions.

[16 : 09] We catch a glimpse of this in God's Word. Daniel 7.10 A stream of fire issued and came out from before him.

A thousands thousands served him and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court said in judgment and the books were open.

In Daniel's day and even in the New Testament period that was an unimaginable number. Ten thousand was about the highest number that is recorded in Scripture.

Consider John when he was on the Isle of Patmos. Revelation 12.4 Then I looked and I heard around the throne. And the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands.

So I thought how much is a myriad? I don't think I've ever used that word in conversation. Well I looked it up. A myriad in the Old Testament was considered ten thousand.

[17 : 25] They were fixated on that ten. They couldn't get beyond ten thousand. That was staggering. I mean you remember when Peter said do I forgive my brother seven times and Jesus said no seven times seventy.

They couldn't focus on that. Four hundred ninety that was an unimaginable number. God's angels dwell in heaven with him and exist in a highly organized rank structure.

There's rank order in heaven. They supervise over thrones and dominions and principalities and powers and authorities and so on.

So they have jobs to do given them by their chief supervisor the Lord Jesus Christ. There are special classes of angels.

We know them as cherubim, seraphim, and those called living creatures. Now we know the names of only three of God's created angels.

[18:40] angels, Michael, Gabriel, and Lucifer. I did find a reference on the computer to a fourth angel named Raphael and I thought I'm going to look that up.

Well that came out of Roman Catholicism and it's in the Apocrypha books but not in the inspired books that the Holy Spirit authored in the New Testament. and Raphael is not in the New Testament or the Old Testament.

I looked. I googled. God has given His angels great power. There's a number of examples in there of the great power.

I remember Sodom and Gomorrah. Remember those guys? They thought they were going to rape those angels. And all of a sudden they're all blind. They can't even find them.

staggering around. But let me give you another demonstration of the power of angels. Isaiah 37 and 36.

[19:50] Then the angel of the Lord went out and struck an angel of the Lord. One.

and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when men arose early in the morning and that was those guys camped around those 185,000, behold, all of the 185,000 were dead from one angel.

And I think he killed them with a jawbone of a, should I say an ass in here? Can I say that? That's the Old Testament. I mean, that's... They were all dead. One angel.

Let me tell you something about these Assyrians. They were hardened combat veterans. These guys slew people by the thousands. Angel came in there and killed 185,000 of them.

That's staggering to me. fallen angels are more powerful than men. And particularly our charismatic brothers, you know, they talk about battling angels all the time.

[21:12] I had one of them, a good friend of mine, I said, you know the best way to battle an angel? He said, how? I said, stay real close to Jesus. Let him do the combat. Good advice.

If you're going to stave off an attack and you think it's a fallen angel, of course, like E.V. Hill, you say, you haven't done anything to make a fallen angel attack you. Why would Satan or a demon want to attack you?

Anyway, the best way to do it is to cry out to the Lord for protection. And the best way to do that, men, is by putting on the whole armor of God.

I'm almost 75. I'm learning every day. I'm learning every day. Put on that whole armor every day. Take time. Go into your prayer closet or close your door at office or wherever you're put on that armor. Okay, where can you read about that? Ephesians 6, verse 10 to 12.

[22:18] Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might, put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

You've got armor available to you, defensive and offensive. Put on that armor. Now, the Jews, over time, 1,600 years, fell into aberrant beliefs concerning angels.

And that's where we're going to spend some time. they did believe they were important in the Old Testament, but the Jews added to the teachings of the Old Testament scriptures concerning angels.

And let me tell you guys, adding to scripture is always dangerous and fatal. I have guys come to my front, not very often out where I live in the country, but who believe that the scriptures have been added to and we don't spend a lot of time.

[23:49] Here's some of the beliefs of the Jews over time can be categorized this way concerning angels. The Jews believe that angels acted as God's Senate.

I hope he had a better one than we do, but anyway, I won't get into politics. They're God's Senate. Jews believe that God was unable to do anything without first obtaining angelic approval.

I just, I almost gag on that. God had to have permission from angels. He had to run it by them, you know, make sure the game plan.

Jews believe that 200 special angels controlled the movements of the stars. Jews thought that one angel controlled the days, the months, and the years of the calendar.

They were in charge of that. One angel was thought to control the sea and all other bodies of water on earth.

[25 : 02] They thought another angel had control of all lightning, thunder, hail, dew, rain, and snow. Well, if they do, send more rain. We can use it. Jews believed that angels were in control of hell and tortured those that dwelt there.

And this last little item, the Jews thought there was a special class of recording angels that wrote down every word spoken by man.

So they wrote down everything you said. A final and very important point concerning Jewish beliefs about angels. They believed that the Old Covenant was brought to them from God by angels.

In the minds of the Hebrews, they placed angels on a level that was unapproachable by men, including this Nazarene carpenter.

[26 : 09] See, there's the problem. They thought this Jesus, this guy named Jesus, he can't even approach an angel. The Jews viewed angels as their mediators between them and God.

that was a devastating error. That's a fatal error. Now, many in this Hebrew church undoubtedly believed in and wanted the ministry to carry on an exaltation of the angels since they were their mediators between God and them.

angels. No doubt this Hebrew church had many other errors concerning angels and this had to be addressed. It was crucial, in fact, at the outset of the book of Hebrews that this be addressed.

The writer of Hebrews wants to set the record straight as to the biblical role angels play in God's sovereignty.

He wants them in their right place and he wants the Lord Jesus in his right place at the right hand of the Father.

[27 : 42] Now, there can be no doubt that angels played a significant role. I'm not going to diminish that. I mentioned one, Sodom and Gomorrah, and there's several instances in there.

I remember when the angels visited Abraham. That's one of the most beautiful sections in the Old Testament. God had just changed Abraham's name from Abram to Abraham and nobody knew it. Not yet. Maybe Sarai knew it. Maybe not even his wife. And these three angels showed up and one of them was Jesus Christ. And then Jesus speaks and said, should I tell Abraham what I'm about to do?

That got his attention because no one knew. He knew who that was then. He fell on his face. This is God in the form of an angel. And he was right.

Here's another one. Stephen, the first church martyr, he said this, Acts chapter 7 verse 51 to 53. You stiff neck people.

[28 : 55] That'll win some friends. They're about to kill him. You stiff neck people. Uncircumcised in heart and ears. You always resist the Holy Spirit.

As your fathers did, so you do. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the righteous one, whom you have now betrayed and murdered.

You who received the law as delivered by angels and you did not keep it? In Galatians 3.19 we read this. Why then the law?

The law was added. That's always intriguing. What was the law added to? This is not the purpose of our study tonight, but it's worth studying sometime.

The law was added to the Abrahamic covenant of grace. They were under grace, but they wanted law, and they couldn't keep it for a moment.

[30 : 09] It was added because of transgressions until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

Who was the intermediary spoken of there? Moses. Moses. The law came from God to Moses, delivered by angels on behalf of God.

No theologian has ever understood exactly how that works. I'm not a theologian, I don't understand. Because the old covenant was delivered by angels, the Jews held angels in high regard, but much more than they deserved.

There's the rub. angels. They even worshipped angels in some quarters among the Jewish people. They bowed down and worshipped angels. This fact would have brought great trepidation to the pastor of that Hebrew congregation and whomever the author of the book of Hebrews is.

[31 : 28] Now we're going to skip over until next time. We will begin next time with Hebrews chapter 1 verses 4 and 5.

So I want to whet your appetite. I've already read it once, I'm going to close. verse 5. Having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say, you are my son? Today I have begotten you, or I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son.

And that's where we will start, Lord willing, next Monday night. Thank you.