

Crown Him with Many Crowns

Hebrews 1:4-14


Incarnation (Hebrews 1-2)

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“God sends no one away empty except those who are full of themselves.”

- **Dwight Lyman Moody**

 pen your Bible to **Hebrews 1**. We are continuing a series from the Book of Hebrews entitled “Incarnation.” This morning we are looking at a message entitled: “Crown Him with Many Crowns.”

Don't Miss the Gift for the Packaging

Have you ever heard of the saying, “Don't miss the gift for the packaging”? It was Christmas again, and Jill spent what seemed like a very long time **not only** buying presents but wrapping them up. Half the fun of Christmas morning, especially for the little ones, after all, is the exciting packages in glittering wrapping, with ribbons and bows, all telling you something about how wonderful the present itself will be.

But that Christmas **William**, just 3 years old at the time, was so excited by the wrapping, and inside the beautiful box, that he almost ignored the present itself. Indeed, though he seemed pleased in a way with the present, later that day we found him behind an armchair playing with ... the box. He was jumping in it like it was a race car! It worked so well, and was after all very fun. The fact that I can't now remember what was in the box itself – the real present – makes the point.

The book of Hebrews is anxious that the people it's written to shouldn't make that mistake. The prophets of the Old Testament – the priests and the sacrifices – and all the glorious kings of Israel – were all but the packaging for the real gift. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! He's the gift. All the rest of the Bible is just packaging!

Review

Last week we learned that the God who created the world entered into the world. And when he entered He shined God's essence. He displayed the beauty of holiness and love and compassion. He who was born in Bethlehem was also upholding the entire “universe by the word of his power” (1:3b). And after making “purification for sins” by dying on the Cross and rising again, he ascended to the right hand of the Father and He sat down!

He sat down! The priests in the Old Testament never sat down because their work was never done. But Christ said, “It is finished!” His work was done. It was accepted by the Father. And He “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Hallelujah what a Savior!

Hebrews 1:3b-4, The point of the Chapter: Jesus is Better than Everything!

Christ “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.” And here we have the point of today’s message. As fantastic as the packaging is, it’s nothing compared to the actual gift inside. Angels are important. They are wonderful. Can you imagine what it must have been like to have been a shepherd the night Jesus was born? The angels were singing and shouting, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace and good will toward men.” Undeserving mankind was presented with the greatest gift.

As important as the angels were, they were just messengers of a far greater Being. The Being of all beings. The one who the writer of Hebrews says has the very nature and essence of God Almighty. Verse 3, “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.”

Advance Sketches of God by the Prophets

God had for a long time been sending advance sketches of himself to his people, but now he’s given us his exact portrait.¹

Jesus Has the Same Essence of God

Christ has what theologians call the same “essence” of God. That is He has the very nature of God. He is Alpha and Omega, He has no beginning and no end. He has all power, is everywhere present at once, has all knowledge. He is not limited in His being in any way. He is the exact import of the Father’s nature.

Arius

There was an ancient and early heretic named Arius who had a problem with this. Apparently he didn’t read the book of Hebrews and thought that though Jesus was not God, he was the highest of all created beings. This is identical to what the Jehovah’s Witnesses teach to this very day.

Like human fathers, said Arius, God the Father existed before God the Son. Arius claimed that the Father begat the Son in His first act of creation: the Son was created before all other creatures and maintains an exalted status as the agent through whom everything else was created. Nevertheless, as worthy as He is, the Son is, in the final analysis, just a creature, according to Arius.

There is an ancient word for this teaching: hogwash! Arius objected to the plain teaching of Scripture that Jesus is not a mere angel or even the highest of angels. Jesus is God! Jesus is YHWH of the Old Testament.

This is the point of the book of Hebrews. As we follow the argument of Hebrews 1, the writer gives us five reasons Jesus is not a created being or the best of the highest of created beings, the Angels. Jesus is far greatest than the most magnificent creatures because He is not a created being. He is God.

Again here are five reasons.

¹ Wright, N.T. (2011-05-31). Hebrews for Everyone (New Testament for Everyone) (p. 3). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

I. The **Name** of Jesus shows He is no mere creature (vs. 4-5).

Holy Scripture

Hebrews 1:4-5, "having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs."

Names are Important

Names are important. The writer of Hebrews says Jesus claim to superiority is found in His Name or title as Son of God. When you are the King of England, you are entitled to a place of authority. When we say Jesus is a Name above all names, we are talking about His position as King of kings and Lord of lords. He has a much higher name than angels. His name is "Son of God."

Angels are Pretty Important

Don't get me wrong, angels are important too. They are called *elohim* or gods as a nickname in Psalm 97:7 and Deut. 32:43 because they are so close to God. They guard His presence (Isaiah 6) and cry out "Holy, holy, holy!" They do His bidding, and as ministers they are like "flames of fire." Job calls them "sons of God" in the same sense that we are all sons and daughters of the living God as created beings.

Preoccupation with Angels: Ray, Marcel, Rich a Bunch of Angels!

Our world today is obsessed and preoccupied with Angels. After all, when you mention the name "angel" you are talking about beings far greater than humans. To say someone is an angel is a **great complement!** I mean, look at **Ray** Loikets and **Marcel** Reid and **Rich** Clyburn. Aren't they just a bunch of angels?!

Everybody seems to be interested in angels. What a great name they have. There are television programs, books and all sorts of trinkets having to do with angels. However, by Christ's title which He has inherited from His Father, He has obtained a far more excellent name than they.² Listen to the argument the author makes in Holy Scripture. He's talking about Jesus title and Name being infinitely superior than angels.

Holy Scripture

Hebrews 1:4-5, "having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs."

5 For to which of the angels did God ever say,
"You are my Son,
today I have begotten you"? **Psalm 2.7**

Or again,
"I will be to him a father,
and he shall be to me a son"? **2 Samuel 7.14**

² Spencer Jr., Glen (2012-06-04). Hebrews (The Expository Pulpit Series) (Kindle Locations 456-461).

J. I. Packer explains that the relationship of the “God-man to the Father while He was on earth was not a new relationship occasioned by the incarnation, but the continuation in time of the eternal relationship between the Son and the Father in heaven. As in heaven, so on earth.³

The Name or Title “Son of God”

The argument of these verses is straightforward: by means of these Old Testament prophecies and teachings, in Psalm 2 and the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7, Jesus has a **title** greater than angels. **His title reveals His position as God.** He is God’s Son. Christ’s supremacy rests upon his inheritance of the name “Son of God.”

Why is the Title “Son of God” Important?

The two passages our writer quotes in **verse 5** are two of the Old Testament passages the early Christians **used most frequently** when they were struggling to say what had to be said about Jesus. Who is He? Is He an Angel? A Prophet? A King? Psalm 2.7 and 2 Samuel 7.14 both speak of the **Messiah**, the ultimate son of David, as God’s own special son.⁴

A Messianic Psalm/ Same Rank as God!

Hebrews 1:5a, “For to which of the angels did God ever say,
“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you”?” **Psalm 2.7**

The writer of Hebrews quotes Psalm 2 because at the time of Jesus it was respected as a Messianic Psalm. The writer did not have to prove that this was a Messianic prophecy referring to the exalted position of the Messiah, because the **people already believed it.**

According to Jewish thought, a person’s name revealed his essential nature and could express rank and dignity.⁵ The Messiah here is given the same rank and position and nature as God Himself.

TODAY I Have Begotten You!

So, if Jesus is eternally Son of God, what do we make of the statement in Psalm 2:7 that “today I have begotten you”?

The word “begotten” and “this day” is obviously referring to **an event in time and space** where Jesus was proven to be who He claimed to be. “This day have I begotten you.”

Three Times Jesus Declared to be the Son of God

Three times in Scripture either God the Father or an angel declares Jesus to be the Son of God: before Jesus **birth** an angel says to Mary, “You are bearing the ‘Son of the Most High God.’” Then we see it at Jesus’ **baptism**, and His **transfiguration**. Remember the voice from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, hear Him!”

³ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1979), 54–55.

⁴ Wright, N.T., 4.

⁵ Hughes, R. K. (1993). *Hebrews: an anchor for the soul* (Vol. 1, p. 36). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

When Was Jesus Begotten?

But WHEN was Jesus **begotten**? First of all “begotten” is a colloquial phrase that does NOT mean created. It has the idea of displaying something that is already there, like a baby being born. How do we know this?

Fortunately, the New Testament helps us elsewhere, as is often the case. One of the principles of interpretation that the writer of Hebrews strictly follows is that **Scripture interprets Scripture**. We call this principle *the analogy of faith*.⁶

Let us listen to Paul in Romans 1. According to Paul, Jesus was always God’s Son, and God was his Father. But the phrase, “today I have become your Father” evidently refers to Christ’s **exaltation** and **enthronement** as Son subsequent to the resurrection, because Romans 1:4 says Jesus “was declared with power to be the **Son of God** by his resurrection from the dead.”

And in **Acts 13:32-33** Paul specifically proclaims that the resurrection fulfilled Psalm 2:7: “We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father’” (cf. Ephesians 1:20). “Son” is Jesus’ eternal name that was given exalted declaration in his resurrection and exaltation. No angel ever had that!⁷

No Angel Given a Title Like This!

No angel was ever given a title like this! No angel has the very essence and nature of God. Which of the angels is enthroned as Son of God and declared to be God’s Son in that way?

Hebrews 1:5a, “For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you’?” **Psalm 2.7**

The answer: to none of the angels did God say, “I have begotten you.” What does that mean? Christ is eternally begotten. He is of the very essence of God the Father. And this was proven at His resurrection.

2 Samuel 7: The Davidic Covenant

Hebrews 1:5b, “Or again, ‘I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son’?” **2 Samuel 7.14**

Our author further grounds his argument with a second quotation, taken from 2 Samuel 7:14, “Or again [implying, to which of the angels did God ever say], ‘I will be his Father, and he will be my Son’?” (v. 5b). This is also a quotation from a well-known Messianic passage, commonly called the Davidic Covenant, in which the prophet Nathan told David that after his death his son would build a house for God and establish a royal throne that would endure forever.⁸

Since Solomon failed to fulfill this, as did the following Davidic kings, the later prophets looked forward to a greater son of David who would fulfill it. The fulfillment of that ancient

⁶ Phillips, R. D. (2006). *Hebrews*. (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.) (p. 29). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

⁷ Hughes, 37.

⁸ Ibid.

promise was celebrated in the angel Gabriel's annunciation to Mary: "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:32, 33; cf. Luke 1:68; Romans 1:3).⁹

As God He takes on the nature of man as the Davidic king! He has come to inherit all that Adam lost!

Inheriting the Name Above All Names

Jesus has inherited a name! He is the God-Man. He has come into the world as the prophesied son of Abraham and son of David. Yes. But He also has the Name Son of God. It is a Name above all other Names! Why? Because only as God could He take back what Adam and us have lost.

How did Jesus *inherit* a Name? Because He took back the lost inheritance of Adam. He could do that as a mere angel. He also could not do it as a mere man. He had to be greater than angels or men. This is the burden of the writer of Hebrews – to show that Jesus is God. He is greater than Angels.

Eyes Fixed on Jesus

So, though we don't know who the author of this letter was – it's likely a companion of Paul recording the preaching of Paul. But we know something even more important about the author of Hebrews. Right from the start, he has **his eyes fixed on Jesus**; at the end of the letter, when he draws everything together, he urges us to have our eyes fixed on him, too (12.2; 13.8). Are you ready for the challenge?

II. The worship of Jesus shows He is no mere creature (vs. 6).

Holy Scripture

The next point in the author's argument for Christ's superiority over angels is that he is worshiped by angels.

Hebrews 1:6, "And again, when he brings the **firstborn** into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."

The Song of Moses in Deuteronomy

Here he turns to the final lines of verse 43 of the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:43). The Jews considered these final lines to be Messianic.¹⁰ Moses is a great deliverer, but there is one greater than Moses. There is a Deliverer that is worshipped by angels.

Elohim (gods) as Angels

Of course in Deuteronomy 32:43, angels are called *elohim* (Hebrew) and then in the Septuagint, it is translated to *angelos* (Greek) or angels. This is a correct interpretation. Angels are to worship Christ. They are called *elohim* or gods because they are so close to God. It is a

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

nickname or a colloquial expression of God to call the angels “sons of god” or “gods” in the sense of “judges” or those given God’s authority.

The angels are exalted creatures, living so close to God, carrying out His will, but they are not divine. They are not deity. No, they are commanded to worship Christ as the Firstborn.

Firstborn

Hebrews 1:6, "And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world..."

The writer of Hebrews speaks of Christ as God’s “firstborn,” and it is for this that Christ is worshiped. The firstborn is a title of total authority. When someone was the “firstborn” in the ancient world in a family, they had total control over the inheritance.

The point here seems to be Jesus’ **special exalted status** over all the created realm. It does not mean that Jesus is first among creatures, but rather that he is **exalted** above the creatures. He has total authority over the created realm. F. F. Bruce explains, “He is called firstborn because he exists [eternally] before all creation and because all creation is his heritage.”¹¹ Christ is the creator and therefore the **First in charge** – the firstborn.

We are to Worship Christ!

Christ is far more than a mere angel. He is worshipped by angels. Angels (unless they are fallen angels) do not worship other angels, for that would be angelolatry! The only one they can and do worship is God. Our job is to lift up Jesus!¹²

As great as the angels are, they are still creatures. Angels are to worship Christ. This was God’s command and their delight. And Jesus is the One **we ought to worship**, the One we want to trust and follow. Far from worshipping the angels, we should follow their example and worship God’s Son.¹³

Is Christ first in your life? Is He the blazing center of your worship?

Charles Spurgeon Quote

I love the words of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. He said, “Depend on it, my hearer, you never will go to heaven unless you are prepared to worship Jesus Christ as God.”

III. The deity of Jesus shows He is no mere creature (vs. 7-9).

Holy Scripture

Next the writer demonstrates the superiority of Christ to angels by contrasting their statuses: the angels are *servants*, but the Son is *sovereign* as Almighty God.¹⁴

Psalm 104:4 is quoted regarding the angels’ being servants:

Hebrews 1:7, "Of the angels he says,

“He makes his angels winds,

and his ministers a flame of fire.” (Psalm 104:4)

¹¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, rev. ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 56

¹² Hughes, 38.

¹³ Phillips, 32.

¹⁴ Hughes, *ibid.*

Chariots of Fire

Angels sometimes spectacularly inhabit wind and fire to do God's bidding—as when the angel shot up through the flame of Manoah's sacrifice, or when the angels carried Elijah away in a chariot of fire—but in doing this they are only servants!

The Exalted Status of Jesus

On the other hand, Christ, the Son, is eternally sovereign as God Almighty. Here the writer quotes Psalm 45:6, 7, a Psalm addressed originally to a Hebrew king, but phrased in language that could only be fulfilled by the ultimate Davidic king, the Son¹⁵

Hebrews 1:8, "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.
9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions." (Psalm 45:6-7)

Here is one of the most amazing and important statements in all of Scripture: Jesus is God eternal! Those who say Jesus was just a man, or just one of many angels, or one of many prophets of God, or was but a subgod of some sort are lying and bringing upon themselves the anathema, the curse, of God. Jesus is no less than God. The Father says to the Son, **Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever**. God the Father acknowledges God the Son. I believe this verse gives the clearest, most powerful, emphatic, and irrefutable proof of the deity of Christ in the Bible—from the Father Himself.¹⁶

Angels are only Servants

Angels, his servants, may at his request take on wondrous forms, become seraphim thirty feet high or men 300 feet high, and perform feats beyond not only the capacity but the imagination of mankind. But they are still *servants*. He is the eternally enthroned, sceptered, anointed *sovereign*. It is impossible to logically think of Christ and angels as peers, any more than we could of a sovereign and his slaves as equals.¹⁷ Jesus Christ is God! Worship Him!

IV. The immutability of Jesus shows He is no mere creature (vs. 10-12).

Holy Scripture

For the fourth proof of Christ's superiority, the writer quotes Psalm 102:25–27 found in our text:

Hebrews 1:10-12, "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;

¹⁵ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, pp. 19, 20

¹⁶ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1983). *Hebrews* (p. 33). Chicago: Moody Press.

¹⁷ Hughes, 39.

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.”

Christ Outlives the Worlds

What stupendous thoughts! As a man during his lifetime outlives many successive suits of clothes, so Christ will see and outlive many successive material universes, yet will himself remain eternal and unchanging.¹⁸

Christ will roll up the universe like a garment!

Christ Ushers in the New Age

There is coming a time, says the Psalm, when the present world, earth and heaven alike, will be rolled up like a scroll, and new heavens and a new earth will take their place. The Messiah will roll up the old universe like a garment and will usher in the ‘new age’, the ‘age to come’, the time of renewed heavens and earth.¹⁹

Good News to those Who Suffer

To the suffering Jewish believers who first heard these words, these sure words about Christ must have felt like refreshing rain. Their world was not only changing—it was falling apart. But their superior Christ remained the same—eternal and unchanging²⁰—“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

Christ Made the Worlds

I tell you my dear friend; the Lord Jesus Christ flung universes into space. Universes came from His fingertips. He spoke and it was so. The nearest star, Proximus Sintari, is four and a half light years away. Well, how far away is that? Well, light travels at a hundred and eighty six thousand miles a second. Now, the closest star is 4½ light years away, but astronomers are speaking of universes that are five billion light years away. The universes that we are 52 billion light years wide! Who made all of that? That little baby. Jesus made all of that.

He is immutable! The unchanging One deserves your trust, your worship, and your all!

V. The destiny of Jesus shows He is no mere creature (vs. 13-14).

Holy Scripture

The clinching argument for Christ’s superiority over angels is vocation: Christ *rules*; angels *serve*. That Christ rules supreme is proven by a passage quoted more often in the New Testament than any other (fourteen times). It is Psalm 110:1, which is quoted here in verse 13:

Hebrews 1:13-14, "And to which of the angels has he ever said,

¹⁸ Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 21.

¹⁹ Wright, N.T. (2011-05-31). *Hebrews for Everyone* (New Testament for Everyone) Westminster John Knox Press, 8.

²⁰ Hughes, 40.

“Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?

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

Absolute Rulership

The answer is, of course, a resounding, “None, not one, no one!” To none of the angels did God promise ultimate dominion!

Christ’s absolute rulership is dramatically seen here in that it was the custom for a defeated king to prostrate himself and kiss his conqueror’s feet (see Psalm 2:12) and for the victor to put his feet on the captive’s neck so that the captive became his footstool (see Joshua 10:24). One day every knee will bow before Christ, and every tongue will confess that he is Lord (Philippians 2:10, 11; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:24, 25). And all the angels will be in that number, both good and evil, for the Son is infinitely their superior.²¹

A Superior Vocation than Angels

In contrast to Christ’s superior ruling vocation, the angels’ vocation is that of serving. “Are not all angels,” the author writes, “ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?” (v. 14). This does not mean their serving is a disgraceful vocation. Far from it! It is a sublime privilege. The point here is, however, that as high a vocation as being an angel is, it is inferior to the Son’s vocation of ruling the universe.

The destiny of Jesus Christ is that ultimately everything in the universe will be subject to Him. “At the name of Jesus every knee [will] bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth” (Phil. 2:10). Jesus Christ, in God’s plan, is destined to be the ruler of the universe and everything that inhabits it. As Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:24, “Then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. ... 28 And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:24–25, 28).²²

Christ’s Intercession

The fact that Jesus is seated on the throne of God does not mean that he is inactive. Rather, he is attentively concerned with the affairs of his flock. Being seated, he wields authority over and for the sake of the church.²³

Our Destiny

Notice the destiny of God’s angels: **Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?** Jesus’ destiny is to reign. The angels’ destiny is to serve forever those who are heirs of salvation. What a wonderful, awesome prospect for Christians! In addition to being forever in God’s presence, our destiny is to be served by angels forever.²⁴

²¹ Edward Fudge, *Our Man in Heaven* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1974), p. 23.

²² MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1983). *Hebrews* (p. 36). Chicago: Moody Press.

²³ Phillips, 42

²⁴ MacArthur, 37.

Focus on Jesus!

In this brief fourteen verse chapter, we are called to focus on the deity of Jesus Christ established by divine names. He is called Son, Lord, and God. By divine works He creates, sustains, governs, redeems, and purges sin. By divine worth He is the one to be worshiped by the angels and all other creatures in the universe. By divine attributes He is omniscient, omnipotent, unchanging, and eternal. In all these ways the superiority of Jesus Christ is proclaimed.²⁵

Conclusion: Due North, Lake Ponchatrain

Why must we focus on Jesus? Because Hebrews 2:1-3 says that if we don't we will drift away!

When I was in Louisiana we once went sailing on Lake Ponchatrain. The waves were 15 feet high. We had just a small boat. I got sea sick. I remember so thankful that we could all get back to dry land. But out there on the sea in the Gulf of Mexico, you couldn't tell in that storm which way was due north. You had to look at the instruments in the boat. They told you which way is due north.

Jesus is our due north in life. When you are suffering and confused look to Him. Worship Him! Enthone Him! And you will never drift away!

²⁵ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1983). *Hebrews* (p. 37). Chicago: Moody Press.