**Bethel Christian Fellowship**

**Fair Lawn, NJ**

**Hebrews (3): The Book Of Better Things**

**“The Superiority Of The Son To Angels”**

**Hebrews 1:4-14**

**January 21, 2024**

“It’s a Wonderful Life!” is one of the best movies of all time. It’s the story of a man named George Bailey, and a guardian angel by the name of Clarence. There’s nothing impressive about Clarence at all, except perhaps his kindness. He’s a rather bumbling and unassuming old man, who hasn’t been able to complete his assignments with any degree of success. That’s the reason why he hasn’t earned his wings.

Thankfully, the recipients of this letter never watched that movie. If they had, they would have been in shock. They never could have imagined anything comparable to Clarence. They were in awe of angels, and their powerful role as special messengers of God. After all, thousands of angels assisted Moses in the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai.

This is implied in Deuteronomy 33:2-3, which says, “*The LORD came from Sinai . . . He came with myriads of holy ones* *. . . At your holy feet they all bow down, and from you receive instruction, the law that Moses gave us . .* .” The New Testament authors are more explicit. In Acts 7:53 we read that “*the law was put into effect through angels*;” in Galatians 3:19 we read that “*The Law was put into effect through angels by a mediator* (Moses); and in Hebrews 2:2 we read that the message of the Old Covenant was “*spoken by angels*.”

Since the theme of Hebrews is that Jesus is better than anything that came before Him, the author will have to deal with this important subject. He takes a three-fold approach: ***First***, he *affirms* the superiority of Christ to angels by appealing to seven Old Testament texts (1:4-14). ***Second***, he *exhorts* his readers (and this includes us) to pay more careful attention to the word that God has given to us in His Son. If what the angels said was binding, then what God has said through the One superior to angels must be more binding (2:1-4). ***Third***, he *explains* how Jesus, with a human body, could still be superior to angels, who are spirits (2:5-18). Today’s message focuses on the first of these three sections on angels (1:4-14).

**A. The Opening Statement ( 1:4):** “*So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs*.” In the previous verse we were told that after making purification for sins, Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. “*So*” . . following His resurrection – ascension – exaltation, Jesus became superior to the angels, and inherited a much superior name than theirs. As will become clear, that name is “Son.”

**B. The Seven-fold Proof of the Superiority of the Son (1:5-13).** Of the seven quotations that follow, most are taken from the Psalms, and all are taken from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint. This unbreakable chain of Scriptures supports the claim that Jesus is superior to angels (v. 4). As we shall see, it’s because of His position of privilege and power as God’s exalted, eternal, and royal Son. It’s obvious that our author knows his Bible and how to use it!

**1. Psalm 2:7** (Hebrews 1:5a): “*For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘****You are my Son, today I have become your Father*?**” This is the first of two rhetorical questions. While the angels were called collectively “*sons of God*” (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7), no individual angel was ever addressed as the “Son of God.” That title belongs uniquely to our Lord Jesus Christ.

But isn’t Jesus the pre-existent *eternal* Son of God? Yes. And wasn’t He the Son of God throughout His earthly ministry? Yes. Then in what sense has He “*become*” God’s Son, and what did our author understand by the “*today*” in this quotation? Paul’s statement in Romans 1:4 helps to answer this important question. There we read that Jesus was “*declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead . . .*” Thus it was at the resurrection that Jesus began “a new phase of that Father-Son relationship” (ESV Study Bible note), as He was *declared* by God the Father to be the Son-of-God- **with power**.

That’s the “today” of the Messianic announcement of Psalm 2:7, as applied to Jesus by the author of Hebrews. Prior to His resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God, Jesus was the Son of God in weakness and frailty and lowliness and humility (His earthly sonship). But now He is the Son of God in power and authority and sovereignty (His exalted sonship). That’s the first reason Jesus is superior to angels.

**2. 2 Samuel 7:14** (Hebrews 1:5b): “*Or again, ‘****I will be his Father and he will be my Son*?**” This Old Testament passage is the part of the Davidic Covenant in which God promises to extend David’s royal rule through his son, Solomon. But the author of Hebrews sees Solomon as a type or foreshadowing of the greater Son of David, Jesus Christ, who is also God’s Son. To no angel was any such promise ever made. Jesus is the promised heir of David, whose kingship will be “*established forever*” (2 Sam. 7:16).

**3. Deuteronomy 32:43** (Hebrews 1:6): “*And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, ‘****Let all God’s angels worship him****.*”In Deuteronomy it is Yahweh, the God of Israel, whom all angels are called to worship. Here this verse is applied to the Son, who also deserves worship as God (Cf. v. 3). Further, the title given to Jesus as “firstborn” also confirms His sovereignty and majesty. It’s drawn from Psalm 89:27, where God says of David: “*And I will appoint him to be my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth*.” David never literally achieved this status in his lifetime. But he foreshadowed the promised lineage that culminated in Jesus, the Christ, whom our author proclaims as God’s “firstborn,” the most exalted of all the kings of the earth. Angels, therefore, worship Christ; He doesn’t worship them.

**4. Psalm 104:4** (Hebrews 1:7): “*In speaking of the angels he says, ‘****He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire***.” The point of this psalm is that God makes His angels as swift as the wind and as quick as lightening in their service of Him. Angels, therefore, are creaturely messengers who do God’s bidding. Jesus, on the other hand, is God’s “first-born,” the Creator and Sustainer of all things, whom angels serve.

**5. Psalm 45:6-7** (Hebrews 1:8-9): “*But about the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.’*”

Psalm 45 celebrates the wedding of a king of Israel and his bride. The words quoted here are addressed to the king, who belonged to the house of David. He is portrayed as “god” because he acts and speaks on behalf of God, and with His full authority. Our author, in quoting this psalm, sees in Jesus a fore-shadowing or a “type” of the true king of Israel, the Messiah, or “the Christ.” When applied to Jesus, therefore, He is explicitly declared to be God: “*Your throne, O God, is forever and ever*.” Angels minister *before* the throne, but the Son is seated *on* the throne, having been exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high – “forever and ever.”

**6. Psalm 102:25-27** (Hebrews 1:10-12): “*He also says, ‘In the beginning, O LORD, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end*.’” As in verse 6 (“*Let all God’s angels worship him*”), the author takes a passage addressed to Yahweh (“*O LORD*”) and applies it to the Son. These verses, therefore, are an expanded portrayal of what was said earlier (v. 2); the Son is the One through whom God created all things, including the angels!

**7. Psalm 110:1** (Hebrews 1:13): “*To which of the angels did God ever say, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet*?’” Psalm 110 originally referred to the enthronement of the King of Israel and the promise of His victory over all His enemies. But the author of Hebrews consistently applies it to Jesus (5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:3, 11, 17, 21; 8:1; 10:12-13; 12:2). He *alone* is the One who sits enthroned and to whom all of His enemies will be subjected. No angel ever heard it said to him – or about him – “Sit at the right hand of God until all your enemies are made a footstool for your feet!”

**The Conclusion (1:14):** “*Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?*” This final statement reinforces the contrast between angels who serve (vv. 6-7) and the Son who reigns (vv. 8-9). “All” angels, regardless of rank (even Michael and Gabriel), are ministering spirits. But the Son is the Sovereign, seated at the Father’s right hand. Their purpose is to serve all who are “*heirs of salvation*” through faith in Christ. But Jesus is the King who sends them.

The Bible refers to angels 273 times (108 times in the Old Testament and 165 times in the New). They are magnificent, mighty, wise, and holy. As God’s special enjoys, or messengers, they only speak the unadulterated gospel truth. They announced Jesus’ conception, birth, resurrection and second coming. They delight in His gospel, and they rejoice over every repentant sinner.

As ministering spirits, they keep very busy, and are known to have appeared in human form (Heb. 13:2). They are given charge over believers. They protect us from harm, direct us on journeys, comfort us in distress, deliver us from disasters, and rout our spiritual enemies. They are present at death and will accompany our souls to glory.

But as strange and encouraging and awe-inspiring as angels may be; and as helpful and strengthening and as edifying as their ministry proves to be – Jesus is better! He is the exalted, royal, eternal Son, the only One deserving of our worship and praise. Yes, we can thank God for angels who minister to us, as they did with Abraham (Gen. 18:1-3), Gideon (Jud. 6:11-24), Elisha (2 Kings 6:15-17), and Peter (Acts 12:1-17). But why would anyone think of exalting them and investing their confidence in them rather than Christ? Jesus Christ is better!