

Hebrews Study Session 3 - 1:5-14

The introduction to the book of Hebrews (1:1-4) ends with a comparison between the Son and the angels. The author immediately continues and builds on that comparison in this next section - the rest of chapter 1. As we're going to see, there are three main arguments the author makes to state his case to the waffling believers. To do this he is going to use a style of argument used by Jewish rabbis known as the "chain" method. It's a persuasive technique that builds and defends an argument by citing numerous quotations from an authoritative source. In this case the authoritative source will be the Old Testament, which at the time Hebrews was written, was the Bible. All his arguments can be summed up in the following statement, "*The Son is not an angel and is above the angels.*"

[Read Hebrews 1:1-4]

There are two major questions we need to answer to understand this section of Scripture.

1. Why does the author focus such attention on angels?
2. What are the assumptions the author makes in the texts quoted?

Let's look at the second question first because we have the knowledge to answer it already.

Q: What assumptions do you make, foundational level assumptions, when you open and read the Bible? (*that it is the Word of God, that it is true, that it presents a unified revelation of God and His will, that the main theme is the revelation of Christ*)

It is important to realize that the author of Hebrews held to the same assumptions of Scripture that we do today. When we use the Bible to make an argument about something about God, our faith or life, we are appealing to it being a Word from God and being true. Since was written by different men, we also claim that each man was inspired by the Holy Spirit, thus God is the ultimate author and it so it doesn't matter if we quote Genesis or Revelation - it's all inspired and comes from God's mouth. The main thing God wants man to know that He sent His Son to pay for our sins so that we could exist in eternity in fellowship with Him. The author of Hebrews read the Old Testament and saw some differences between the Son and angels. This is what led him to write this section.

[Read Hebrews 1:5]

This is a rhetorical question. It's really the author's way of making an assertion. To realize what the assertion is, we need to look at the Old Testament verses the author uses. Before we read them, it is important to know that the author of Hebrews and the early church saw these verses as relating to Jesus. Though they had historical fulfillment in the ancient times, Jesus Christ, God's Son, was the culmination and fulfillment of what was meant in these verses.

[Read Psalms 2:7-12]

Q: What does this section of the Psalm say about the Son? (*He has a special relationship with the Father, the Father will give Him rule over the nations, the Son is to be paid homage (literally 'kiss')*)

[II Samuel 7:14-17] - This is a prophecy related to from Nathan to David.

Q: What does this passage say about the Son? (*He has a special relationship to the Father, the Lord's lovingkindness will never depart from Him, His kingdom will endure forever*)

Q: Looking at the portions of these passages that the author of Hebrews quoted (and not the rest), what do these Old Testament Scripture passages teach us about the Son? (*that He had a unique relationship with the Father*)

The first point that the author is making to his original audience is that the Son had a unique relationship with the Heavenly Father.

But there are some troubling "temporal" references (begotten, (be)came, today, will be) in this verse we need to understand or end up in heresy.

1. These are not references to bringing someone into existence. Jesus was the Son prior to creation. He was referred to as the Son at His incarnation.

2. The early church understood these passages to refer to Jesus' induction into His royal position as King of the universe. Like we were discussing last week, there were two events in Jesus' life which vindicated Him before the entire created order as the Son of God. They vindicated Him as the Messiah and established His eternal kingdom.

Q: What do you think these two events which vindicated Jesus were? (*resurrection and exaltation - being made to sit at the Father's right hand*)

3. God's becoming the Son's Father refers to God's open expression of their unique relationship upon Christ's enthronement in heaven. Once the Son had finished His assigned work the Father fully revealed to all of creation the Son's position - one that He had always had but was now displayed for all to know and act accordingly.

Q: If you fail to take these three points into consideration, what possible wrong conclusions might you draw from these verses? (*1 - Arian heresy - the Son had a beginning, not eternal; 2 - the Son was always in the same state of exaltation He is currently in now - no change in status based upon completed work*) (*The first wrong conclusion was espoused by a heretic named Arius but was put to rest by the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D.; the second was espoused by Augustine and Thomas Aquinas and is called "eternal begetting" which is not supported by either the Old Testament citations or Hebrews. Psalm 2 is a royal enthronement psalm. The full rights and privileges of the authority of sonship were given at the Son's enthronement/exaltation.*)

Q: Remember, the comparison is between the Son and the angels. What did this unique relationship with the Father say about the Son's position in relation to the angels? (*the Son was superior to the angels*)

Q: Why is the Son superior to the angels? *(Due to His unique relationship with the Father)*

So the main point of Hebrews 1:5 is that the Son is superior to the angels based on His unique relationship to the Father.

The second point the author makes is made in Hebrews 1:6-7.

[Read Hebrews 1:6-7]

The term “first born” is used here in reference to the Son. In the ancient world this phrase most often referred to the child born first to its mother. It has religious overtones in the consecration of the first born to God. First borns also had a special place in the hearts of their fathers, shared the father’s authority, and inherited the lion’s share of the property after the father’s death.

The New Testament uses the phrase a bit differently. In the 8 occurrences of this word (prototokon), six of these times, the word is used to express Christ and His preeminence in the church and in the universe (Rom. 8:29, Col. 1:15, Heb. 1:6, Heb. 12:23, Rev. 1:5). So instead of implying that the Son of God was born (beyond the incarnation), it is intended to show his preeminence in creation, His rightful place as first and beyond all others in importance rather than just a place marker for a physical birth.

Since the author is speaking of the Son’s preeminence among all creation, when he says the “world” (v.6) he is meaning the universe - the physical and spiritual realms together. This magnifies the exaltation to go beyond just men, especially since angels are the ones specifically mentioned in the text who are to worship the Son.

[Read Psalm 104:4]

Q: What does this say about angels? *(God makes His angels the wind and fire)*

Q: What do the terms “messengers” and “ministers” imply? *(They stress the role as servants of another. They are subservient or below the One they serve.)*

[Read Psalm 97:7]

Q: What does this verse say supernatural being should so? *(worship God)*

Q: What does this say about supernatural beings? *(They are not equal. God alone is to be worshiped and He is above all the other supernatural beings.)*

In Scripture angels are created heavenly beings who function as messengers and ministers of God, revealing His will or announcing key events. They also serve to protect God’s people. Angels worship God. Thus, the angels are to worship the Son.

Q: So from these verses, what is the point that the author of Hebrews is making considering his comparison between the angels and the Son? *(The angels are inferior to the Son)*

Q: In these any of these passages, is there anything negative stated or implied about angels? *(no)*

Throughout the Old Testament, angels are seen as magnificent and powerful spiritual beings, messenger and servants of God Himself. Yet, even when compared to beings as high as angels, the Son is of infinitely higher status.

So the point of Hebrews 1:6-7 is that the angels are inferior to the Son.

The third and last point of the author in this section of Hebrews is found in Hebrews 1:8-13.

[Read Hebrews 1:8-13]

Q: What are the three things mentioned in v.8 that denote the Son's royal authority? *(throne, scepter, kingdom)*

Q: What is the essence/nature of the Son according to v.8? *(the Son is God - God the Father is calling God the Son, God)*

[Read Psalms 45:6-7]

Q: Who is the Son anointed above? *(His fellows, companions - the other spiritual beings)*

[Read Psalms 102:25-27]

Q: What does this passage say about the Son? *(He founded the universe and He will bring it to an end (the Terminator), He will endure and is eternal)*

[Read Psalms 110:1]

Q: What does this verse say about the Lord? *(He will make David's Lord (the Son) sit at His right hand until His enemies have been made His footstool)*

Q: What two things does this imply?

- 1) *That God has enemies*
- 2) *Some of those enemies have not yet been subdued*

Q: What are the themes we can take away from those Old Testament verses about the Son? *(He has authority as the One who reigns, He is eternal, He is over the other spiritual beings, He is exalted at the right hand of the Father, He is the promised ancestor of David - the Messiah, He created the world and He will bring it to an end)*

Q: With these things in mind, how would you put this third and final point of the author's argument about Jesus? *(See example below)*

The Son is the eternal God who both created the world and will bring it to an end and exercises authority over His created order. He is the promised Messiah that was to come from David's lineage and is superior to all other creatures, including the angels.

[Read Hebrews 1:14]

In the ancient world, the authors did not use paragraphs as we do nor did they use subheadings for outlines. The common way to signify something as the climax or end of an argument, especially in oral arguments, was to repeat the beginning thought. In this case, it is given in v.14 - angels are ministers/servants of God sent to help believers.

Q: What are the three main points to this section of Scripture?

- I. The Son is superior to the angels based on His unique relationship to the Father.
- II. The angels are inferior to the Son.
- III. The Son is the eternal God who both created the world and will bring it to an end and exercises authority over His created order. He is the promised Messiah that was to come from David's lineage and is superior to all other creatures, including the angels.

In history, one of the main things this very passage helped iron out doctrinally was the doctrine of the Trinity. It was established formally at the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. Their statement read, "*We believe that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one God, maker and ruler of every creature, and that 'Father' is not 'Son', nor 'Holy Spirit' 'Father' or 'Son'; but a Trinity of mutually related persons, and a unity of equal essences.*" In other words, God is one essence but there are three distinct persons in the Godhead.

Q: Why do you think that the author focuses so much attention on angels (based upon what we know about this group of believers thus far)? (It was important, since they viewed angels as having a role in divine communication of revelation that they understood that Jesus was not just an angel but something superior to all angels.)

In the beginning of chapter 2 is the first of three exhortations given in the book of Hebrews. (2:1-4). To make the statement the author is going to make, he needed to make sure his listeners knew absolutely positively without a doubt that Jesus was God and not an angel. If the ministry of angels held a wondrous and terrifying place in their faith, how much more the ministry of the Son of God?

There are also two readily visible modern applications to this passage. One deals with authority. Our culture is in crisis right now. It's a crisis of authority. To whom should we listen in order to find out what to believe and then order our lives accordingly? There is deep confusion over where to look for truth and meaning to life.

Q: What are some of the places people are currently looking for authority?

Let me suggest a "below the radar" approach to evangelism when confronting the issue of authority confusion based on chapter 1 of Hebrews. People are as interested in angels today as

they were in the ancient times. Go into Barnes & Nobles and count the number of books on the shelves you can find that mention “angel” in the title and deal with spiritual beings. I bet you’ll find at least 50, if not more, and remember that Barnes & Nobles is a secular bookstore. The author of Hebrews shows great respect for angels. However, few people have a solid (Biblically accurate) understanding of angels. Using Hebrews 1, you can build a Biblically strong understanding of angels that can be shared with another person.

Q: What are some of the truths we see about angels in Hebrews 1? (*they are servants of God, they are used by God to help believers, they are below the Son, etc.*)

Just remember that in I John 4:1 we are told to test the spirits because not all of them come from God. Also, in II Corinthians 11:14 we are told that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Thus, when talking to someone about angels, we need to make sure that we keep to the Scripture and what it teaches.

The main thing you want the other to take away is that angels are not independent vendors of ecstatic experiences but rather servants of the One Living God. However, as mighty and majestic as angels are, they are inferior to the Son of God, who is Jesus Christ. The discussion about angels can be used, in this passage, to build a bridge to talk about Jesus and He being the ultimate source of authority and then the gospel.

Another low-lying piece of fruit for an application in this chapter is that of creation. Jesus is the agent of creation and the One who will bring this creation and history to an end. So there is a problem relating to authority when it comes to discussing creation. Many defer to science thinking it will trump theology on this topic. I’ve mentioned this many times before. There are two types of science: 1) agenda-driven science or that which seeks to prove a pre-determined outcome, usually for the sake of money, 2) pure science which seeks to discover truths about the universe and has no agenda. The problem was that when science was first starting to be seen as a possible source of authority, those who used it, used it as a weapon against the Christian faith. In response to this, fundamentalism rose and its response was to reject science completely. However, a better response is to find the science which seeks to find the truths of the world and watch how it slowly but surely proves the truths found in Scripture. Here are two such scientific “discoveries” that have come to light recently:

1) Hugh Ross, in his book *Creation and Time*, says that using the most recent studies, the universe can be traced back to a single, ultimate origin of matter, energy, time and space as we know them, and therefore, the Cause of the event that brought the universe into existence must have an existence independent of the universe. (pp. 126-7, 132)

To this finding, Robert Jastrow (and agnostic astronomer) said, “*Scientists have been scaling the mountains of ignorance...conquering the highest peak... pulling themselves over the final rock... to be greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.*” (Quoted from Ross, *Creation and Time*, p. 128)

2) According to research from the Rockefeller University and the University of Basel in Switzerland, in 2018 found that all human beings are descended from one male and female couple. This research was done to study the different lines of genealogy and how many human ancestors mankind derived from only to find out that it turns out that the Bible was right again, there was one couple who spawned everyone else.

All of this is to say that rather than throwing out all science as garbage, look to differentiate between junk (agenda-driven) science and the real, pure science done for the sake of knowledge. In the end, those scientists who are seeking the truth will come and sit down with the theologians who have been waiting for them for centuries. I don't know about you, but every time I open the Bible any more, I find yet more verses stressing that God was the creator and His Son, Jesus Christ, was His agent of creation. It's not just the first thing the Bible says but it goes a lot deeper than that in God's mind as He keeps reinforcing it through His Word.

Q: Are there any other applications that you can take away from this that stand out to you?

Q: Are there any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?