

Hebrews
Chapter 1:4-14
“Better Than ...”

All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted

Calvary Chapel Fellowship of Enid
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If you were with us last week then you remember that the theme of **Hebrews** is the superiority of Christ. And as I shared with you then, the author measures the superiority of Christ to several standards ... such as:

Chapters 1 and 2: The angles.

Chapter 3: Moses.

Chapter 4: Joshua.

Chapters 5 through 10: The priesthood.

And within that theme, one of the things the book of **Hebrews** teaches us, is that it's difficult for people to change. It's difficult to break free of traditions and habits.

It's a struggle to let go of the old and take hold of the new ... which is part of the reason for the writing of this book.

Being written, it would seem, to Christian Jews living outside of Jerusalem ... probably in Italy ... and who were struggling to abandon the old and take hold of the new. Something that's difficult for all of us.

It's what we were taught ... it's what we've always done ... it's what we've always believed.

So, to change such things, in many cases, is to admit that we were wrong in what we did or believed. And that's tough for people.

Several years ago, I was with another pastor and we were ministering to an elderly gentleman who claimed to be a Darwinian Atheist and he told us that he didn't believe he had any choice about what he believed.

For him ... it was so ingrained that it felt impossible to even consider something different than what he'd been believing and living for so many years.

Now, he admitted to being thoroughly miserable in his current life ... but that misery was somehow a better choice in his mind ... than admitting that he'd been wrong. Traditions

and habits can be horrible taskmasters.

Well in the passage we'll be looking at this morning ... the tradition that the author deals with is ... the elevation of angels. The veneration or, in some cases, even the worship of the created rather than the Creator.

Last week, we made it all the way through **verse 3** ... so pick it up with me if you would in ...

Verse 4: Speaking of Christ, the writer introduces this topic in preparation for the list of proofs he's about to give us. All of them dealing with Christ's superiority over angels ... the first proof being the name He inherited.

Jesus Christ! Jesus the Messiah. Jesus the eternal God. Jesus, the Savior of the World. No other name carries with it all the attributes of God.

Q. Remember when Jesus was introducing Himself to the Seven Churches of Revelation? -- He chose these words ...

"I am the Alpha and the Omega" ... "I am the first and the last" (Revelation 1:8 & 17)

He is the beginning of all and He is the end of all. All things began with Him and all things will end with Him. He's the origin and destiny of all creation. The author and finisher of life.

He was with us at birth and He will be with us in death. It all began in His presence and it will end in His presence.

So, there's a flow to God's will ... and that flow is always toward Himself. Not toward man, not toward angels ... not toward any created thing. His name is the more excellent one.

Now let's read the remaining list of proofs that Christ is superior to the angels. Then we'll come back and look at some of them in more detail ...

Verses 5-14: As you may remember from previous studies ... the word "angel" simply means messenger [aggelos (ang'-el-os)]. And that's a lofty title when you're talking about the delivery of God's messages, but Christ is so much more than a mere messenger. During the years of His earthly ministry, He was an extension of God Himself ... He was and is God!

Q. Remember how the author referred to Him in verse 3? -- He called Him, "The Beaming Forth of the Brilliant Radiance of God".

He came to this earth, not as a mere messenger or even a ministering spirit, but as God.

Yet ... throughout time, various groups have sought to bring Christ down to the level of an angel.

The Jehovah's Witnesses hold, as part of their defining doctrine, that Jesus was Michael the Archangel. But Jesus is repeatedly referred to as superior to angels ... not one of them.

And the Mormons make Jesus a Cherub ... a part of the angel order ... claiming that Jesus was Lucifer's brother (**Ezekiel 28:11-19**).

Yet a plain reading of the scripture tells us, Jesus can't be reduced to the status of a mere angel!

Now look again please at ...

Verse 7: Just as wind and fire are mere servants of God ... so too are the angels.

But not so with Christ ... He came as the Son of God ... an extension of God ... and He is God.

As the writer tells us in ...

Verses 8-9:

Q. Did you catch that? – God the Father is referring to God the Son as ... God.

And similarly, in **verse 10**, God the Father attributes the creation of the universe to God the Son.

Q. Who can argue with the deity of Christ when God's the one making the assertion? – Jesus is not a mere angel!

Verses 10-11: Speaking of the universe He created, God says, "One day, when this universe has reached the extent of My purposes for it, I will fold it up like a garment and toss it out." It'll be gone.

And **Revelation 21** says that He will then create a New Heaven and a New Earth ... **Isaiah 65 and 66** talk more extensively about that, but here's a tidbit for you ...

Q. Did you know ... that big ball of fire in the sky that we call "our sun", won't last forever? -- Scientists tell us that right now ... the sun burns up 2.4 million pounds of mass per second ... so it will one day exhaust its fuel supply and, just like a campfire ... it will flicker out.

Now I fervently believe that the Lord will return long before that happens, but the point is

... nothing's unchanging except God Himself.

By the way, many of the scientists who tell us that the sun is burning up 2.4 million pounds of mass per second are the same scientists who tell us that the earth is 4.5 billion years old.

The problem they create for themselves is that if you reverse the consumption rate of the sun and add back in what they say has been consumed ... even if you only go back 100,000 years ... the sun would have been so large and hot, that the seas of earth (where they say, life spontaneously developed), would have boiled dry in less than 30 days!

And if you go back 1,000,000 years ... the sun would have actually been touching the surface of the earth.

In fact, 6,500 years is about as far back as you can go before the earth's temperature would have made it uninhabitable. So much for "Millions and millions of years ago ..."!

But no matter what the age ... it will all come to an end at the time predetermined by its Creator.

Verse 12: God is the one and only unchangeable thing that's ever existed.

And that's one of the things that makes this life so challenging for us ... the fact that it's always changing.

The climate changes. Landscapes change.

The power players change, and the biggest stars change.

Families change ... and ... we change.

But God never changes. He never changes!

Q. Why would He? – He's been perfect from the start!

Q. Interesting isn't it how we value His immutability and yet it's that same immutability that often dissuades the unsaved from coming to Him? – People think they want a contemporary God ... one who keeps up with the times and changes as the world changes, but to have such a god would be to have a god who didn't always do what was right or best.

The Lord said in ...

Malachi 3:6 For I am the LORD, I change not ... KJV

In other words ... it's a good thing for us that He doesn't change like we do. He's not swayed by His anger or His elation. His first thought on each issue is His last thought because it's right.

And of Jesus it's repeated later in **this book** ...

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

I'm certain, at least for myself, that I underappreciate the fact that my God is always right. And because He's always right ... He has no need to change His mind.

Finally ... skip down to...

Verse 14:

Q. "Those who will inherit salvation"? – That's us! All who choose salvation through Christ.

But notice that we're not described as being inheritors, but as those who will inherit ... it's future tense ... unlike the reference in **verse 4** that says Jesus has already inherited.

He is the firstfruits (**1st Corinthians 15:20-23**). We are heirs, but we will not inherit until the fullness of this age has come.

None-the-less, **this verse** tells us that the angels are all ministering spirits sent to render service to us ... which is very cool, but also very misunderstood and misappropriated.

See ... there's a grand difference between rendering service and being our servants!

God's angels are not our servants ... they're His servants. But in His love and grace and mercy He's dispatched them to our side.

Really ... more than servants in the classical sense ... they're assistants. Sort of like a parent / child relationship. Before a child learns to tie their shoes ... parents assist them. And they continue to do so until that child masters the task.

But ... by God's decree, the job of ministering to this lost world is ours ... mine and yours. We're to be sharing the good news with the lost and edifying the saints.

Those are tasks given to us even though the angels could, no doubt, accomplish them faster and more efficiently and, probably, more effectively, than we do.

But the angels ... as the ministering spirits of God have been sent only to assist and teach us so that we can better accomplish that task.

And that should help set the tone of our relationship to them. You wouldn't praise the paintbrush or the canvas for a masterful work of art ... you'd praise the artist.

In the same way ... we're reminded here that the angels are merely God's tools ... He's the Master and as such ... He's the only one worthy of praise.

Conclusion:

Q. So what's the application in this for us? – That ... no matter how angelic or spiritual. No matter how powerful the messenger may be ... if their message contradicts or otherwise disagrees with Jesus Christ ... then we must categorically renounce and reject it.

1. The only memory I have of church as a child, is of Sunday School ... and I can, to this day, remember being told that if a woman wore pants or earrings ... she was going to Hell.

2. I can remember being told that “**Thou shalt not judge**”, meant live and let live. Don't confront people personally about their sin or errors.

3. An in the church I attended as a teenager, I can remember being taught that salvation was a free gift of God, but if I wanted to keep that salvation ... I was going to have to earn it. That if I didn't maintain a certain standard of conduct, then God would take away my salvation.

4. And I remember going to a Christmas program at the denominational church in Texas and watching the deacons remove a man who was sitting two pews in front of us because he was wearing a sleeveless shirt and had tattoos.

And this concerned me ... so went to my very close friend who was an elder in another church of that same denomination and he explained to me that they didn't want the young people to get the wrong idea about what was acceptable in church ... that we're to give God our best and that that man wasn't doing that.

At the time, I was totally ignorant of the scripture, so although it seemed inconsistent and felt wrong, I trusted my good friend ... after all he was my friend ... he wouldn't lead me astray.

But we all have these issues. The Jews had issues. For them it was the Law ... part of it being delivered by angelic beings. And then there were the prophets ... men who'd also been guided and ministered to by angels.

For us it's the things we've learned from our parents or our pastors or favorite Bible teacher.

But Jesus Christ trumps them all and John tells us ...

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Jesus came to this earth as the Word of God wearing flesh. He is the Word so, where any

messenger contradicts the Word ... the messenger is wrong ... no matter who they are or how angelic they might be.

We have to remain moldable to the scripture. We cannot get so locked into what we've heard or believed or acted upon that we become hardened to the Word of God.