

III. Better Than the Angels

October 17/18/19, 2017

Hebrews 1:5-1:14

Aim: To demonstrate that Jesus is superior to the angels in His name, honor, nature, existence, and destiny.

A. About Angels

1. What the Bible Says

Hughes: What are angels? What does God's Word tell us? Angels are mentioned over 100 times in the Old Testament and more than 160 times in the New Testament.

MacArthur: The Bible speaks a great deal of angels. There are 108 direct references to angels in the Old Testament and 165 in the New. The primary purpose of their creation was to render special worship and service to God.

a) Appearance

MacArthur: Angels are spirit beings and do not have flesh and bones. But they do have bodies. Whatever heavenly form angels have, they are capable of appearing in human form (cp. 13:2). Angels may also appear in other forms (cp. Mt. 28:3-4). Angels are highly intelligent and have emotions (cp. Lk. 15:10). Angels can speak to men as recorded in many places in Scripture.

Hughes: Ordinarily when angels are visible, they have a human-like appearance and are often mistaken for men (see Gen. 18:2; 19:1-2; Mk. 16:5). Sometimes they have shined with glorious light (Mt. 28:3; Lk. 2:9). Other times they have appeared as fabulous winged creatures—seraphim and cherubim (Ex. 25:50; Is. 6:2).

b) Organization

Hughes: They exist in vast numbers. On one occasion they are described as assembling in a great throng 'numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands' (Rev. 5:11). In most cases they are invisible, as was the experience of Balaam when the Lord had to open his eyes so he could see the angel blocking his way (Num. 22:31). Or consider Elisha's servant who had his eyes opened so he could see that he was protected by encircling chariots of fire (2 Kgs. 6:17).

MacArthur: Angels do not marry and are unable to procreate (Mt. 22:2-30). In light of Colossians 1:16-17, it seems that they all were created simultaneously. The Bible makes no mention of any angels being added to those of the original creation. God made them all at once, each with a unique identity. Angels are not subject to death. A third of them fell (Rev. 12:4), but they still exist as demonic spirit beings. Their number, therefore, neither increases by procreation or additional creation nor decreases by death or by annihilation.

MacArthur: Angels were all created before men, and are therefore countless ages older than men and evidently number in the trillions (cp. Dan. 7:10; Rev. 5:11). According to Mark 13:32 and Jude 6 the unfallen angels live in all of the heavens. The heaven where God resides in a special way is called the third heaven; the second heaven is the spatial, infinite heaven; and the first heaven is around the earth. Angels are highly organized and divided into ranks, in what is doubtlessly a very complex organization. The various ranks apparently have supervisory responsibilities over thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, authorities, and such. Among

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the special classes of angels are cherubim, seraphim, and those described simply as living creatures.

c) *Functions*

Hughes: The Hebrew word for angel is *malak* and the Greek word *angelos*. Both mean ‘messenger,’ designating their essential functions as divine message-bearers. As God’s messengers they can wield immense power—for example, staying entire armies (2 Kgs. 19:35) or delivering captives (Acts 12:7-11).

MacArthur: Angels are more powerful than men, and men must call on divine power to deal with fallen angels (cp. Eph. 6:10, 12). Angels can move and act with incredible speed. Some angels have names: Michael, Gabriel, Lucifer. Michael is the head of the armies of heaven and Gabriel is called ‘the mighty one.’ Lucifer is the name Satan had before he fell. Angels minister to God and do His bidding. They are both spectators and participants to His mighty works, both redemptive and judgmental. They ministered to Christ in His humiliation. They also minister to God’s redeemed by watching over the church—assisting God in answering prayer, delivering from danger, giving encouragement, and protecting children. They also minister to the unsaved, by announcing and inflicting judgment.

Hughes: Regarding angels’ specific function, there are at least four: 1) Angels continuous *worship and praise the God they serve* (Job 38:7; Ps. 103:20; Is. 6:1-3; Rev. 4:8; 5:9-12). 2) Angels *communicate God’s message to man*. They assisted in bringing the Law (Acts 7:38, 53). Angels revealed the future to Daniel and to the Apostle John (Dan. 10:10-15; Rev. 17:1; 21:9; 22:16). Gabriel announced the births of both John the Baptist and Jesus (Mt. 1:19-24; Lk. 1:11-28; 2:9-12). 3) Angels *minister to believers* (cp. Ps. 34:7; 91:11-12). Angels have dramatically delivered believers from prison (Acts 5:19; 12:6-11). They are present within the Church (1 Cor. 11:10). They watch the lives of believers with interest (1 Cor. 4:9; 1 Tim. 5:21). They carry believers away at death to the place of blessedness (Lk. 16:22). 4) Angels will be *God’s agents in the final earthly judgments and Second Coming*. They will call forth the elect with a loud trumpet and from the four winds (Mt. 24:31; 1 Th. 4:16-17) and will then separate the wheat from the chaff (Mt. 13:39-42). The book of Revelation tells us they will open the seals, blow the trumpets, and pour out the bowls of wrath. They will also execute the judgment against Satan and his servants (Rev. 19:17-20:3, 10).

2. What Jews Believed

MacArthur: Because of the Talmudic writings and popular rabbinical traditions and ideas, the Jewish people at the time this epistle was written had begun to embellish the basic Old Testament teachings about angels. The writer of Hebrews, therefore, was writing not only against the backdrop of true biblical teaching but also against that of common Jewish misconceptions.

MacArthur: Most Jews believed that angels were very important to the Old Covenant. They esteemed these creatures as the highest beings next to God. They believed that God was surrounded by angels and that angels were the instruments of bringing His word to men and of working out His will in the universe. Angels were thought to be ethereal creatures made of fiery substances like blazing light, who did not eat or drink or procreate.

MacArthur: Many believed the angels acted as God’s senate or council and that He did nothing without consulting them. Some Jews believed that a group of angels objected to the creation of

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man and were immediately annihilated and that others objected to the giving of the law and attacked Moses on his way up Mount Sinai. Many names for angels were coined. The supposed ‘presence angels,’ who stayed in the presence of God at all times, were given such names as Raphael, Yurriel, Phanuel, Gabriel, and Michael. They believed two hundred angels controlled the movement of the stars and that one very special angel, the calendar angel, controlled the never-ending succession of days, months, and years. A mighty angel took care of the seas, while others superintended the frost, dew, rain, snow, hail, thunder, and lightning. Still others were wardens of hell and torturers of the damned. There was an angel of death and, on the other hand, a guardian angel for every nation and even every child.

MacArthur: Many Jews believed that the Old Covenant was brought to them from God by angels. This, above all else, exalted the angels in the minds of the children of Israel. They believed that angels were the mediators of their covenant with God, that angels continually ministered God’s blessings to them. Stephen’s sermon indicting Israel alludes to this basic belief (Acts 7:53; cp. Gal. 3:19). The Old Covenant was brought to man and maintained by angelic mediation. The Jews knew this, and consequently had the highest regard for angels.

Phillips: Among many Jews in the first century there was an unhealthy emphasis on angels, in part because of the excellent things said of them in Scripture. While angels are not to be thought of frivolously, neither are they to hold an improper place in our devotion. Probably the main reason why the author of Hebrews needed to emphasize Christ’s superiority to the angels has to do with angels’ association with the old covenant given at Mount Sinai. In 2:2 we see an example of this teaching, where it is said that the Old Testament law was ‘declared by angels.’ Acts 7:53 tells us that the law was ‘delivered by angels,’ so that their mediation of the law at Sinai does have biblical support.

MacArthur: Some respected angels to such a degree that they actually worshiped them. Gnosticism involved, among other things, the worship of angels. It even reduced Jesus Christ to an angel. The Colossian church had been flirting with Gnosticism and Paul warned them, ‘Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels’ (Col. 2:18).

3. Why Hebrews Cares

MacArthur: So, to the Jewish mind angels were extremely exalted, immeasurably important. If the writer of Hebrews, therefore, was to persuade his fellow Jews that Christ is the Mediator of a better covenant than that given through Moses, he would have to show, among other things, that Christ is better than angels—the thrust of 1:4-14. Christ must be shown to be better than the bearers and mediators of the Old Covenant—namely, the angels. Seven Old Testament passages are used to establish this truth.

Phillips: In saying that Christ is superior to the angels, the author is again emphasizing the superiority of the new covenant over the old, and therefore the folly of turning back from the gospel. He makes this point here by means of seven Old Testament quotations. The argument of these verses is straightforward: by means of these Old Testament prophecies and teachings, the writer of Hebrews demonstrates the claim of verse 4, that Jesus became ‘as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs.’ Christ’s supremacy rests upon His inheritance of the name ‘Son of God.’ The author’s greater burden is to show the superiority of the new covenant to the old, the gospel to the law, that covenant which is mediated

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by Christ to the covenant mediated by angels. His purpose is to persuade his readers not to fall back from Christianity to the old and now obsolete religion.

Schreiner: In 1:5-14, the author puts forward the same kind of arguments we saw in 1:1-3: 1) Appointment as royal heir – v. 2b, vv. 5-9; 2) Mediator of creation – v. 2c, v. 10; 3) Eternal nature and preexistent glory – v. 3ab, vv. 11-12; and 4) Exaltation to God’s right hand – v. 3c, v. 13. But here the author advances his case by citing the OT so that every argument is made by appealing to the OT for support. Hence, we can say that what is asserted in 1:1-4 is elaborated upon and scripturally supported in 1:5-14. The central theme is the Son’s superiority to the angels.

Bruce: In these ten verses our author adduces seven Old Testament passages to corroborate his argument that the Son of God is superior to the angels. His use of them introduces us to his distinctive principles of biblical exegesis, which receive further copious illustration throughout the epistle. Of the seven quotations here, five are taken from the Psalter; of the other two, one is taken from the Former Prophets and one from the Torah.

Hughes: What awesome beings are angels! And what terrific power they wield! But despite all their cosmic excellencies, their significance dwindles in the presence of Christ. Thus, we come to the grand theme of Hebrews 1:4-14, *Christ’s superiority to angels*. The writer of Hebrews creates a mosaic of Old Testament texts from the Septuagint that powerfully demonstrate the superiority of Christ over angels. The argument has many sub-surface puzzles regarding the author’s use of the Old Testament Greek texts, but the argument is clear as he presents five superiorities of Christ.

B. Above Angels (Hebrews 1:5-14)

1. A Superior Name (1:5)

Hughes: Christ’s superiority is first adduced because He has a superior name (see 1:4). According to Jewish thought, a person’s name revealed His essential nature and could express rank and dignity. Jesus had the name ‘Son’ from all eternity, and it is the name He will always keep, as the perfect tense of the phrase ‘the name he has inherited’ (v. 4) indicates. No angel was ever called ‘Son,’ though sometimes they were generically referred to as sons—for example, ‘the sons of God’ presented themselves before the Lord (Job 1:6). But no angel ever had the title ‘Son.’

Schreiner: Jesus is greater than the angels because the OT Scriptures designate Him as God’s Son, which is not a title given to angels. The word ‘for’ (*γὰρ, gar*) introducing 1:5 indicates that the author supports what he asserts in 1:4, which suggests that the more excellent name that makes Jesus better than the angels is ‘Son.’ The author’s goal is to support this claim from the OT Scriptures. He begins by noting that none of the angels was ever addressed as God’s Son. Angels were identified as ‘sons’ but never as the Son (cp. Gen. 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7).

MacArthur: Jesus Christ is better than the angels first of all because He has a better title, ‘a more excellent name’ (v. 4). The angels had always been but ministers and messengers. Only Christ is the Son. The angels are created servants. When the eternal Christ came to earth as a servant—indeed as the supreme Servant—He also assumed the title of God’s Son. He has therefore obtained a far more excellent name or title than they.

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Phillips: The basic reason for Christ's exaltation over the angels is stated in verse 4, that He inherited the superior name, that is, the name of God's Son. This is reinforced in the next two citations, from Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7.

a) *Psalm 2:7*

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

(1) Son

Hughes: Psalm 2 was already a famous messianic psalm, understood to be fulfilled in a future day by a descendant of David who would be crowned king.

Schreiner: The first quotation hails from Psalm 2:7, which is a messianic psalm. The Davidic king will inherit the nations and rule the entire world (Ps. 2:8-9), fulfilling the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that the entire world be blessed through one of their offspring (Gen. 12:3; cp. Ps. 72:17). Verse 7 of the psalm refers to the installation of the Davidic king. The language of begetting is not literal in the context of the psalm but refers to the appointment of the king, to his ascension to the throne. The nations should fear, for God has decreed that the kings of the world serve His Son.

Bruce: The first quotation is from Psalm 2:7. The words 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you' were never addressed by God to any angel. The angels may be called collectively 'the sons of God' (cp. Gen. 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7), but no one of them is ever called the son of God in terms like these, which single out the person addressed and give Him a status apart.

MacArthur: No single angel had ever been called a son of God. As with Christians, angels collectively are called 'sons of God' or 'children of God,' in the sense that God created them and that, in some ways, they reflect Him. Nor to any angel had God ever said, 'Today I have begotten Thee,' because angels were not related to God in any such way. This passage presents to its Jewish readers the awesome truth of Christ as God's incarnate Son. 'Son' is an incarnational title of Christ. Though His Sonship was anticipated in the Old Testament (Pr. 30:4), He did not receive the title of Son until He was begotten in time. Prior to time and His incarnation, He was eternal God with God. The term 'Son' has only to do with Jesus Christ in His incarnation.

(2) Today Begotten

MacArthur: Did He not always have 'a more excellent name' (v. 4)? Yes, but He obtained another one. He was always God, but He became 'Son.' He had not always had the title of Son. That is His incarnational title. Eternally He is God, but only from His incarnation has He been called 'Son.' Christ is not called the Son until His incarnation. Before that He was eternal God. It is therefore incorrect to say that Jesus Christ is eternally inferior to God because He goes under the title of Son. Sonship is an analogy to help us understand Christ's essential relationship and willing submission to the Father for the sake of our redemption. The 'today' of verse 5 shows that His sonship began in a point of time, not in eternity. His life as Son began in this world.

MacArthur: There are two basic events in relation to which Jesus Christ is Son—His virgin birth and His resurrection. He was not a son until He was born into this world through the virgin birth (cp. Lk. 1:32, 35). The sonship of Christ is inextricably connected with His incarnation (Lk. 3:22). Only after Christ's incarnation did God say: 'This is My Son.' However, His sonship came to full bloom in His resurrection. He is the Son not only because He was virgin-born into

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humanity, but also because He was begotten again from the dead. Just as you and I become sons of God in the fullest sense not by being born once but by being born twice, so Jesus Christ became Son in the fullest sense by being born not once but twice. He became a Son at birth; He was declared to be a Son in resurrection (Rom. 1:3-4). The fullness of His sonship comes in His twice birth. Acts 13:33 ties this truth to the same psalm, and even to the same verse (Ps. 2:7), as does the writer to the Hebrews, relating the quotation to the resurrection. Jesus is Son in resurrection as well as in birth. It is His *human* title, and we should never get trapped in the heretical idea that Jesus Christ is eternally subservient to God. He *became* the Son for our sake—setting aside what was rightfully His, humbling Himself, and emptying Himself (Phil. 2:6-8).

Bruce: What did our author understand by the word ‘Today’ in this quotation? In view of the emphasis laid throughout the epistle on the occasion of Christ’s exaltation and enthronement, it is probable that he thought of this occasion as the day when He was vested with His royal dignity as Son of God. The eternity of Christ’s divine Sonship is not brought into question by this view; the suggestion rather is that He who was the Son of God from everlasting entered into the full exercise of all the prerogatives implied by His Sonship when, after His suffering had proved the completeness of His obedience, He was raised to the Father’s right hand.

Hughes: Jesus was always God’s Son, and God was His Father. But the phrase, ‘today I have begotten you’ evidently refers to Christ’s exaltation and enthronement as Son subsequent to the resurrection, because Romans 1:4 says Jesus ‘was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead.’ And in Acts 13:32-33 Paul specifically proclaims that the resurrection fulfilled Psalm 2:7 (cp. Eph. 1:20). ‘Son’ is Jesus’ eternal name that was given exalted declaration in His resurrection and exaltation. No angel ever had that!

Schreiner: The reference is not to the eternal begetting of the Son by the Father, though this reading is rather common in the history of interpretation. Nor is the reference to the virgin birth. The author of Hebrews actually interprets the verse in light of the entire message of Psalm 2. In context the verse refers to the reign of the messianic king, which Hebrews sees as commencing at Jesus’ resurrection and ascension. Jesus is greater than the angels because He now reigns as the messianic king.

Phillips: This raises the question as to when Jesus inherited the name ‘Son of God’ as 1:4 says, or when He was begotten as God’s Son (1:5, citing Psalm 2:7). After all, was He not the only begotten Son of God from before all worlds? In what way, then, did Christ *inherit* the name ‘Son of God’? There are several times in Jesus’ life and ministry when a heavenly voice was heard proclaiming Him to be God’s Son (e.g., Lk. 1:32; Mt. 3:17; Mt. 17:5). About one thing we must be clear: Jesus is eternally Son of God. He did not become Son of God at or subsequent to His incarnation. Thus Paul says in Romans 1:3-4 that according to Jesus’ human nature He is called son of David, but according to His divine nature He is the Son of God (cp. Jn. 1:14). 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’? Fortunately, the New Testament helps us elsewhere as is often the case. Paul cited Psalm 2:7 in his sermon at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:32-33). Paul refers this citation to Christ’s resurrection, and the idea of begetting here is that of declaring or manifesting to the full. Paul amplifies this in Romans 1:4. When God raised our Lord Jesus from the dead, having been crucified for our sins, God the Father brought Him into His inheritance, manifesting before all the world His status as divine Son.

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Phillips: This idea of inheritance is key to the point of these verses. When we think of someone inheriting riches or a name, it has nothing to do with the merit or achievement of that person. To be an heir simply means that you were born in an advantageous position and will not have to work for a living like the rest of us. But that was not the way it was seen in Scripture, nor in the ancient world in which the original readers of this letter lived. In Roman society, when a son came of age, and if he was approved as a man by his father, he would ceremonially be received and bestowed with his name. So it was in Christ's resurrection: by raising Him from the dead, God gave final approval to Him who had perfectly fulfilled the law and obediently endured the cross, bestowing on Him the name 'Son of God' with the Father's divine and supernatural signature. By means of the resurrection, God the Father declared that Jesus Christ, and He alone, is the worthy heir and the true Son of God.

b) 2 Samuel 7:14

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

Bruce: The second quotation comes from 2 Samuel 7:14. There the prophet Nathan conveys the divine response to David's desire to build a house for the ark of God. God desires no house of cedar, but promises to establish David's house in perpetuity. Yet after David's death his son and successor will build a house for God, and his royal throne will endure forever. 'I will be his father,' says God, 'and he shall be my son' (2 Sm. 7:14).

Schreiner: The second citation is from 2 Samuel 7:14. The quotation is embedded in the chapter in which the covenant with David is inaugurated, where Yahweh promises David an irrevocable dynasty. Hence, the author has not randomly found the word *Son* and applied it to Jesus. He applies a text to Jesus that relates to kingship, so Jesus fulfills the covenant promise that a man will always reign on David's throne. Sonship is again tied closely to ruling and reigning. Jesus is greater than angels because He is the enthroned Davidic king, because He is God's unique Son, and as the Son He rules over all.

Phillips: The second citation, from 2 Samuel 7:14, serves to augment the point made by the first: 'I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.' This was originally spoken by the prophet Nathan, as God's response to King David's godly desire to build a temple for the Lord. In this famous passage God promised David that he would always have an heir, and that his son would build God's house. As with many Old Testament prophecies, this had a near and an ultimate fulfillment. On the one hand it applied to Solomon, who built the temple and whom God treated with fatherly affection. But there were things said of this son that could not be true of any merely human descendant of David, especially the statement that 'I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever' (2 Sam. 7:13). This connects the prophecy forward to David's greater Son, Jesus Christ.

Hughes: Our author further grounds his argument with a second quotation, taken from 2 Samuel 7:14. 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. God's words to the Son—Christ—were, 'I will be to Him a father, and He shall be to me a Son.' 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 promise was celebrated in the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary (Lk. 1:32-33).

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Bruce: Although David's immediate successor, Solomon, did build a temple for the God of Jacob, the even proved that the divine promises made to David regarding his son and heir were not exhausted in Solomon. The later prophets looked forward to a greater son of David in coming days in whom 'the sure mercies of David' would be adequately realized. This son of David is the peaceful ruler of Micah 5:2-4, the prince of the four names of Isaiah 9:6ff., the 'leader and commander to the peoples' of Isaiah 55:4, the one 'whose right it is' of Ezekiel 21:27, Zion's king of Zechariah 9:9.

Phillips: The point, then, is 'To which of the angels did God ever say things like this?' The answer is that God said such things to none of the angels, and since He specially dignified Jesus Christ with the name of His own Son, Christ must be recognized as superior. That being the case, to whom should we turn for salvation? Whom shall we worship as our Lord and whom shall we follow, except the one proclaimed worthy to be the heir and Son of God?

Hughes: So we see that Jesus is superior to the angels because He always was God's Son and because two Old Testament sonship prophecies were marvelously fulfilled by Him at His incarnation and resurrection and exaltation. His name is 'Son,' while all that can be said of angels is that they are messengers. How day anyone ever think of demoting Him to the position of an archangel, much less to a perfect man!

2. A Superior Honor (1:6)

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

a) *Deuteronomy 32:43 or Psalm 97:7*

Schreiner: We come to one of the most disputed verses in Hebrews. The author probably cites Deuteronomy 32:43, observing that the angels worshiped Jesus upon His resurrection and exaltation, showing Jesus' superiority to angels. In its OT context, Dt. 32:43 refers to Yahweh, but NT writers often apply to Jesus text that refer to Yahweh (see 1:10-12). Apparently, they felt free to do so since Jesus shares the same identity as Yahweh. Scholars dispute whether the author draws here upon Psalm 97:7 or Dt. 32:43. It is also possible that we have a conflation of both texts in which they are merged together, but it is a bit more likely that we have a citation from Dt. 32:43. Whether Hebrews draws on Ps. 97:7 or Dt. 32:43, the context is similar, for both texts speak of the Lord's sovereignty and rule over all, especially in His judgment over His adversaries.

Bruce: The quotation "And let all God's angels worship him" bears a general resemblance to Psalm 97:7 in the Septuagint: 'Worship him, all his angels.' But it bears an even closer resemblance to the words from the longer Septuagint form of Dt. 32:43, the concluding words of the Song of Moses: 'Rejoice, O heavens along with him, And let the sons of God worship him; Rejoice, O nations with his people, And let all the angels of God ascribe strength to him.'

Phillips: Hebrews 1:6 gives the second argument for Christ's superiority, namely, that the angels are commanded to worship Him. To prove this, the writer cites either Psalm 97:7 or Deuteronomy 32:43, both of which include the statement he has in mind. In the Hebrew text, the angels are referred to as *elohim*, or gods, a not uncommon Old Testament way of speaking of the angels as heavenly beings. The Greek translation, the Septuagint, translates it as 'angels,' and it is from there that our author cites; since he writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, our text tells us the correct interpretation of Psalm 97:7 and Dt. 32:43.

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Hughes: The next point in the author's argument for Christ's superiority over angels is that He is worshiped by angels. Here he turns to the final lines of verse 43 of the Song of Moses (Dt. 32:43). The Jews considered these final lines to be messianic. Remarkably, the line he borrows, 'Let all God's angels worship him,' is not in the Hebrew original but is a Greek addition. Nevertheless, it expresses the divine mind regarding Christ and the Holy Spirit had the writer incorporate it into the inspired text of Hebrews.

MacArthur: Jesus Christ is not only greater than angels because He is God's Son but also because He is worshiped. 'And let all the angels of God worship Him' is a quotation from Psalm 97:7. Even though Christ humbled Himself, even though He was made for a time lower than the angels, the angels are to worship Him. If angels are to worship Him, He must therefore be greater than they. And if He is greater than they, His covenant is greater than the one they brought—the New Covenant is greater than the Old, and Christianity is greater than Judaism.

MacArthur: But did not angels always worship Christ? Yes, they had worshiped Him throughout all the time of their existence; but prior to His incarnation, they worshiped Him as God. Now they are also to worship Him as Son in His incarnate character. This Son who became a man is higher than angels. He is the very God that the angels have always worshiped. It is an absolute sin and violation of the most basic of God's laws to worship anyone but God. So if God Himself says that the angels are to worship the Son, then the Son must be God!

b) 'Firstborn'

Bruce: He is called 'the firstborn' because He exists before all creation and because all creation is His heritage. The title may be traced back to Psalm 89:27.

Schreiner: Hebrews describes Jesus here as the 'firstborn.' Such language hearkens back to Ex. 4:22 where Israel is identified as God's 'firstborn.' The notion of Jesus' sonship surfaces here, for just as Israel was God's firstborn son, no Jesus is God's firstborn par excellence. Because of the Son's obedience, God vindicated Him by raising Him from the dead and by seating Him at His right hand, and thus He brought the Son into the heavenly world to reign over all. When the angels saw the Son exalted in fulfillment of God's promises that began in Gen. 3:15, they were stunned, responding in worship and praise and adoration.

Phillips: The writer of Hebrews speaks of Christ as God's 'firstborn,' and it is for this that He is worshiped. The point here seems to be Jesus' special 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. The idea is again that of inheritance and unique dignity.

MacArthur: In this passage Christ is called the 'firstborn.' Here again, many sects and cults claim a proof text to show that Jesus is a created being (cp. also Col. 1:15). But 'firstborn' (*prōtotokos*) has nothing to do with time. It refers to position. It is not a description but a title, meaning 'the chief one.' The concept was associated with firstborn because the oldest son usually was the heir to the father's entire estate. It is not a time word; it is a right-to-rule word, an authority word. And Jesus Christ is the supreme Firstborn, the supreme *Prōtotokos*, the supreme right-to-rule Son. These passages, therefore, do not refer to Christ's birth as such, but to His sovereignty.

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c) ‘Again’

(1) Incarnation

Schreiner: I have presented some evidence to support a reference to Jesus’ exaltation, but other commentators believe the author refers to Jesus’ incarnation or His *parousia*, and hence we should consider those interpretations. First, some see a reference to His incarnation instead of His exaltation at the resurrection. The word ‘again’ (*παλιν*, *palin*) on this reading simply introduces another OT quotation. According to this interpretation, the author reflects on Jesus’ coming into the world at His incarnation, alluding to the worship of angels in accord with Luke 2:13-14.

Phillips: We have the writer’s own introductory statement: ‘When He brings the firstborn into the world,’ to which he adds God’s command that the angels should worship Him. This probably refers to the coming of Jesus in His first advent, beginning with the virgin birth. Perhaps the most spectacular part of that first Christmas was the choir of angels singing praise. Angels also rejoiced at the open tomb, and again at Jesus’ ascension into heaven. The Book of Revelation reveals that the angels forever worship the Son who is lion and lamb as He sits upon His throne (see Rev. 5:5-6). Great as angels are, they are still creature. So when the firstborn enters the world, it is no surprise to see them as chief among His worshipers. This was God’s command and their delight. It shows that Jesus is the One we ought to worship, the One we want to trust and follow. Far from worshipping angels, we should follow their example and worship God’s Son.

Hughes: Its obvious application is to the angelic worship that had its first occurrence *on earth* at the Incarnation (Lk. 2:13-14a). Jesus was undoubtedly worshiped by angels in eternity past; He was worshiped by angels during his thirty-three years on earth; and He is worshipped in eternity present—a worship to which we have been given a dizzy glimpse (Rev. 5:11-13). 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.

(2) Parousia

Schreiner: Second, others see a reference to Jesus’ future coming, understanding the verse in this way, ‘When He again brings His firstborn into the world.’ This reading fits with the notion that the world here refers to the place where human beings reside, and it connects the word ‘again’ with the verb ‘brings.’

Bruce: The third quotation is preceded by words, especially as rendered in the ERV/AR (‘when he again bringeth in the firstborn into the world’), have been thought to refer to the second advent of Christ. If ‘again’ is taken closely with ‘brings in,’ the meaning certainly appears to be: ‘And when He brings the firstborn into the world a second time.’ But the word order is not as conclusive as some maintain.

MacArthur: The word ‘again’ in 1:6 has caused commentators a great deal of difficulty. Before we can understand ‘again’ we need to look at another key word in the passage: ‘world.’ The more common Greek word for world (*kosmos*, ‘the universe’) is not used here, but rather *oikoumenē* (‘the inhabited earth’). Christ was not the first to be born in the earth, but is the ‘firstborn’—the chief One, the most honored One—who came to an already-inhabited earth, where millions had been born before Him.

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MacArthur: The Greek word order is ‘And when He again brings.’ So in verse 6 ‘again’ refers to God’s bringing His firstborn into the world another time. When is this ‘again’ going to happen? The only possible answer is at the Second Coming. God already brought Him once as Son, and He is going to bring Him as Son again—in blazing glory! It is only at the Second Coming that the fullness of the prophecy, ‘And let all the angels of God worship Him,’ will come to pass. At the present time angels do not understand the whole picture well enough to give the Son full worship. The Old Testament prophets had similar difficulty understanding the full meaning of what they had written. Angels have remarkable intelligence but are not omniscient. When God again brings His firstborn into the world He will say to them, in effect, ‘Now you have the full picture, and your worship can be full and complete.’

(3) Exaltation

Bruce: The RSV and the NEB have rightly reverted to the construction of the AV/KJV: ‘And when, again, he bringeth the firstborn into the world.’ The adverb ‘again’ marks this as a further quotation setting forth the preeminence of Christ. The two previous quotations have marked Him out as the Son of God; this one marks Him out as one who is worshiped by angels. The moment intended by the conjunction ‘when’ is probably neither the incarnation nor the second advent of Christ; it is not so much a question of His being brought into the world as of His being introduced to it as the Son of God, and we may think rather of his exaltation and enthronement as sovereign over the inhabited universe, the *oikoumenē*, including the realm of angels, who are accordingly are summoned to acknowledge their Lord.

Schreiner: Finally, the emphasis on the Son’s exaltation in the context of chapter 1 supports the notion that the angels worshiped the Son when He was exalted. On this reading ‘again’ belongs with the verb ‘says,’ as we see in the ESV. This last option is preferable for several reasons. First, the use of ‘again’ is ambiguous and hence not decisive in construing the meaning. It could well be linked to the verb ‘says.’ Second, there is no clear evidence that the angels worship Jesus at the incarnation. In Luke the angels worship God, not Jesus. Indeed, Jesus’ time on earth indicates that He was lower than the angels during His time on earth (2:6-9), and so a reference to the incarnation as the time when He was worshiped doesn’t fit as well with the theology of Hebrews. Third, the ‘world’ (*οικουμένη, oikoumenē*) refers to the heavenly world, and hence it is likely that it has the same referent here. Fourth, the use of the word ‘firstborn’ (*πρωτοτοκον, prōtotokon*) strengthens the case for the Son’s being brought into the world at His exaltation. The word ‘firstborn’ doesn’t emphasize Jesus’ incarnation (as in Luke 2:7) but His sovereignty and rule. The previous verse in Hebrews (1:5) describes Jesus’ rule as the messianic king, and therefore we have grounds for expecting a similar theme here. The word ‘firstborn’ is used of the Davidic king in Ps. 89:27: ‘I will also make him My firstborn, greatest of the kings of the earth.’ In Psalm 89 ‘firstborn’ designates sovereignty and rule. Such a notion fits well with angels worshiping the Son, for they worship Him as their sovereign; and His sovereign rule began, as chapter 2 will also emphasize, at His resurrection/exaltation.

3. A Superior Nature (1:7-9)

a) *The Son Is Served (1:7)*

⁷*Of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.”*

MacArthur: Jesus is also superior because of His nature. In verse 7 the Holy Spirit shows the basic difference between the nature of angels and that of the Son. The Greek for ‘makes’ is

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poieō (‘to create’ or ‘to make’). Since Christ created the angels (Col. 1:16), He is obviously superior to them. Not only were they created by Him, but they are His possession, His angels. They are His created servants, His ministers, His winds and flames of fire.

Phillips: Third, the writer of Hebrews points out that Christ is superior because of His divine sovereignty. This is the point of the brief citation here in verse 7, as well as of the longer one in verses 8 and 9. Verse 7 cites Psalm 104:4. This is a description of the angels as servants, even glorious ones. We should not despise angels; it is to God’s glory that these are the kinds of servants and ministers He creates and deploys. We would not want to toy with angels. Though their glory is lesser than the Son’s, it is still a very significant glory. Everywhere they appear in the Bible they strike fear into men’s hearts.

Hughes: Next, the writer demonstrates the superiority to angels by contrasting their statuses: the angels are *servants* but the Son is *sovereign*. Psalm 104:4 is quoted regarding the angels’ being servants. The Septuagint here differs slightly in emphasis from the Hebrew by emphasizing that angels become and do the work of winds and fire, whereas the Hebrew of Psalm 104:4 says, ‘He makes His messengers winds, His ministers a flaming fire.’ As to why there is this variation, we can only speculate. But the emphasis of the writer of Hebrews is clear: angels sometimes spectacularly inhabit wind and fire to do God’s bidding—as when the angels shot up through the flame of Manoah’s sacrifice—but in doing this they are only servants.

Bruce: The fourth quotation from Psalm 104:4 relates to the place of angels in the divine administration of the universe, in order to show that, high as that place may be, it is far inferior to the position of supremacy given to the Son. The quotation here conforms to the Septuagint, and expresses an emphasis slightly different from the probable intention of the Hebrew text: ‘Who makes winds his messenger; Flames of fire his ministers.’ That is to say, in the Hebrew text the natural elements fulfill the commissions of God; the winds speed forth on His errands and fire renders Him service. Here, however, the meaning is different. It may be that the angels are portrayed as executing the divine commands with the swiftness of wind and the strength of fire.

Schreiner: The use of the OT here is fascinating. The author cites Psalm 104:4 where the Lord’s creative power is celebrated for ‘making the winds His messengers, flames of fire His servants.’ Hebrews departs from the LXX only at the last word, though what we find in Hebrews and the LXX functions as a literal translation of the MT as well. In the OT the author refers to physical forces in the world. Yahweh rules over all so that the winds do not blow by change or even by the laws of nature but at God’s personal direction. Similarly, the flames that consume are God’s servants.

Schreiner: The author of Hebrews reads the verse a bit differently from the way it is translated in Ps. 104:4. It should be noted at the outset that the meaning presented by Hebrews fits with the wording of the verse in the MT as well. His construal of the verse is not exegetical fantasy but represents a legitimate reading of the text. According to Hebrews, the creaturely nature of angels is featured. God has made ‘His angels winds’ and ‘His ministers a flame of fire.’ The statement should not be interpreted literally as if the winds are actually angels and the flame that burns should be identified as God’s messengers. Hebrews is saying that angels are God’s ministers who serve God in the natural order. In other words, God uses angels as His agents in sending wind and fire and presumably other natural phenomena like rain and sunshine as well. Regardless of what we think of such an interpretation, the verse’s main purpose is clear: angels are God’s messengers and servants. They are not worship as the Son is, for they did not create

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the world, but are part of the created order. They are not the Son but couriers who carry out the will of God.

b) *The Son Is Sovereign (1:8-9)*

Schreiner: Jesus as the Son is contrasted with the angels, for in distinction to them, He does not serve but rules as the divine king. The divinity of the Son and His reign over all are heralded here. The author cites Psalm 45:6-7 in Hebrews 1:8-9. Psalm 45 is a royal psalm, penned in honor of the king of Israel. Truth and righteousness and justice are ascribed to the king. The psalmist envisions the triumph of the king over his enemies so that the cause of truth is advanced. Because of the king's righteousness, he has been exalted.

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

Bruce: The fifth quotation, from Psalm 45:6ff., is set in contrast to the fourth. The forty-fifth psalm celebrates a royal wedding; the poet addresses first the bridegroom and then the bride. The words here quoted form part of his address to the bridegroom.

Phillips: Nevertheless, as great and mighty and glorious as angels are, they minister while Christ sits enthroned. They have servanthood, and He has sovereignty. Therefore, the statement of their glory as servants is set against another Old Testament citation in verses 8 and 9, from Psalm 45:6-7, which exults in Christ's sovereign glory. Psalm 45 is a wedding psalm, depicting a royal bride as she prepares to enter into marriage with the king. But then verse 6 explodes the bounds of propriety.

(1) Divine King (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."*

Phillips: The psalm suddenly says of the king, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.' This verse is an intense example of what is true of the Old Testament as a whole, that it demands fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ. However a Jewish scribe might explain away this statement, no king of Judah could live up to this acclamation. Only Jesus Christ, the son of David and the Son of God, can fulfill this boast of an eternal reign that is perfect in righteousness. The writer of Hebrews is teaching us how to read the Old Testament (and particularly the Psalms), namely, to read it through a Christ-colored lens—promising and anticipating, portraying and celebrating the coming of Jesus Christ (cp. Lk. 24:44).

Schreiner: The author of Hebrews appropriates Psalm 45, seeing it as fulfilled in the Son. Even though the psalm says nothing about the Son, in the words introducing the citation, he says, 'But to the Son,' indicating that the king is none other than the Son, Jesus Christ. The writer picks up the words where the king is identified as God: 'Your throne, God, is forever and ever.' Clearly divinity is ascribed to the Son. The deity of the Son fits with the Son's role as Creator (1:2, 10), His divine nature (1:3, 11-12), His preservation of the world (1:3), and His being worshiped by angels (1:6). The use of the OT is instructive here. The author argues typologically. Jesus as the greatest king in the Davidic line literally fulfills the words of the psalm. The throne, the rule of this divine king lasts forever. He is greater than the angels because He enjoys eternal sovereignty. Furthermore, His role is righteous, for the 'scepter' of His kingdom is characterized by rectitude (*εὐθυτητος*, *euthutētos*). Often kings rule with cruelty and selfishness, mistreating

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and taking advantage of their subjects. The Son's rule, however, is dramatically different, for He rules justly and righteously.

Bruce: To Hebrew poets and prophets a prince of the house of David was the vicegerent of Israel's God; he belonged to a dynasty to which God had made special promises bound up with the accomplishment of His purpose in the world. Besides, what was only partially true of any of the historic rulers of David's line, or even of David himself, would be realized in its fullness when that son of David appeared in whom all the promises and ideals associated with that dynasty would be embodied. And now at length the Messiah has appeared. In a fuller sense than was possible for David or any of his successors in ancient days, this Messiah can be addressed not merely as God's Son (v. 5), but actually as God, for He is both the Messiah of David's line and also the effulgence of God's glory and the very image of His being.

MacArthur: The first part of verse 8 expands on the difference between Christ's nature and that of angels. Here is one of the most amazing and important statements in all of Scripture. Jesus is God eternal. Jesus Christ has an eternal 'throne,' from which He rules eternity as God and King. He is the eternal King, with an eternal kingdom, and an eternal 'scepter' of righteousness.

Hughes: His *throne*, His *scepter*, His *anointing* give us the dimensions of His brilliant sovereignty. His throne—His rule—will never end. His scepter—His authority—will be executed in righteousness—a righteousness that He established in becoming a sacrifice for our sins. His being anointed with the oil of joy refers to the heavenly joy that was His as sovereign King of kings (cp. 12:2). Angels, His servants, may at His request take on wondrous forms, 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 think of a sovereign and his slaves as equals.

(2) Anointed King (1:9)

⁹*You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.*"

Schreiner: The rectitude of the Son's kingdom is elaborated upon in verse 9. Because He has loved what is righteous and hated what is wicked, He has been anointed by God with a position above His companions. Here the author refers to the exaltation, presumably at the resurrection, of the Son as King. In the OT priests (Ex. 28:41; 29:7; 30:30), prophets (1 Kgs. 19:1), and kings were anointed (1 Sam. 9:16; 15:1; 16:3, 12) to signify that they were appointed to office. According to Hebrews, Jesus is anointed to serve as king and is superior to the angels and all others because He has received a position that exalts Him over all other human beings. The reason for this exaltation is His pursuit of and love for what is righteous. Conversely, He detested and rejected evil in all its forms. The one exalted above other human beings was exalted because of His goodness and His devotion to righteousness. Here we have a foreshadowing of Jesus' obedience, faithfulness, and sinlessness in testing.

MacArthur: Verse 9 reveals both Jesus' actions and His motives. He not only acted in righteousness, He 'loved righteousness.' God never varies; His motives, His actions, His character never vary. He is total light. He is total righteousness. Displayed in everything Jesus did was His love for righteousness. Because Christ loves righteousness, He hates 'lawlessness.' If you love God's right standards, you will hate wrong standards. These two convictions are inseparable. One cannot exist without the other. He is exalted, 'anointed,' above all others.

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Jesus' nature (that is, His deity), like His title and His being worshiped, show His superiority to angels.

Phillips: There could hardly be a clearer reference to Messiah-The Anointed One. He is identified as God” ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever’ (Ps. 45:6). But it is ‘God, your God,’ who anoints Him. Not only does this provide an important Old Testament foreshadowing of the doctrine of the Trinity, but it stunningly asserts that the true king of glory, the true Messiah in whom righteousness will come to reign, is one with God Himself. Note, too, the basis for this exaltation—the Messiah’s perfect righteousness. This is why Jesus is exalted; this is why He is anointed as Messiah and Savior, because in His righteousness He is worthy to reign as God’s Son and is able to save sinners.

Bruce: His anointing with ‘the oil of exultation’ refers not so much to His official inauguration as Messiah—when ‘God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power’ (Acts 10:38)—as to the joy with which God has blessed Him in acknowledgement of His vindication of divine justice, ‘the joy that was set before Him’ mentioned in 12:3.

Schreiner: Though 1:8 speaks of the divinity of the Son, here the humanity of the Son is featured. The two references to ‘God’ (*θεος, theos*) in verse 9 both refer to the Father. The Father rewarded Him with rule over all because He was the obedient Son, because He never strayed from doing God’s will.

(3) Companions of the King (1:9)

MacArthur: Some commentators believe ‘companions’ refer to men. But angels, not men, are being discussed in the passage. The Greek word simply connotes an association, nothing more. The point being made here is that Jesus Christ is greater than angels, who are His associates, His heavenly companions. But they are only messengers of God. Christ, too, is a messenger of God, but much more than a messenger and therefore much greater than they.

Bruce: But who are Messiah’s ‘companions,’ whose joy is thus surpassed by His? In reference to a king of David’s line they might be kings of neighboring nations, or members of his own family and court. In the present context, however, the term must have a special meaning. The angels cannot be intended; their inferiority to the Son is so instead on here that they could scarcely be described as His ‘companions.’ It is most likely that the reference is to the ‘many sons’ of 2:10, whom the firstborn Son is not ashamed to call His ‘brothers’ (2:11), and who are designated in 3:14 as the Messiah’s *metochoi* (‘partners’)—the same Greek word as is here translated ‘companions.’ Their joy is great because of their companionship with Him, but His is greater still.

Phillips: All this being true, to whom else will we turn for the righteousness we so desperately lack, but need if we are to stand in God’s judgment? Who else will reign over this earth to establish righteousness? To what power, to what authority, will we run seeking safety and refuge, except the One whom God has enthroned forever, who bears the title, ‘You, O God,’ whose scepter is that of righteousness, and who, at the end of days, will establish righteousness upon the earth?

4. A Superior Existence (1:10-12)

Hughes: For the fourth proof of Christ’s superiority, the writer quotes Psalm 102:25-27, which contains a broken man’s rising awareness and celebration of God’s transcending existence.

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MacArthur: The fourth way in which Jesus is superior to angels is in His existence. In this quotation from Psalm 102:25-27, the Holy Spirit reveals that Christ is better than angels because He exists eternally.

Schreiner: The author cites Psalm 102:25-27, showing that the Son is greater than angels because He is the Creator of all and because He is eternal in contrast to the created world which is temporary. It is fascinating to see that a psalm about Yahweh is appropriated by the author of Hebrews and applied to Jesus Christ as the Son. Apparently the author, since he has identified Jesus as divine, feels free to cite a psalm about Yahweh and apply it to Jesus Christ as well. Such a move is typical of NT Christology, where texts that refer to Yahweh as Lord in the LXX are applied to Jesus Christ.

Bruce: The sixth quotation is taken from Psalm 102:25-27. The words in which the psalmist addressed God here are applied to the Son, as clearly as the words of Ps. 45:6ff. were applied to Him in vv. 8 and 9. What justification can be pleaded for our author's applying them thus? First, as he has already said in v. 2, it was through the Son that the universe was made. The angels were but worshiping spectators when the earth was founded, but the Son was the Father's agent in the work. He therefore can be understood as the one who is addressed in these words.

Phillips: Whenever we see an Old Testament citation, it is good to look back at the passage in its original context, because the New Testament writer often has that in mind as well. This is especially true of 1:10-12, which is a lengthy citation from Psalm 102. In the first half of that psalm, the writer laments the decaying nature of life, the weakness and ultimately the failure of all created things, and especially of human nature. Man's mutability, weakness, and mortality on account of sin make up the content of this lament. These are cries that will find themselves on the lips of everyone who lives on this earth for any length of time. Our days do pass away like smoke, and our bones do give way. Every one of us must reckon with the fact that death awaits us. But in the second half of the psalm, the lamenting man lifts up his eyes to see God and there he finds a great hope. Though all is lost in this life, though hardship and even death await, though the worst calamity brings destruction, the man who trusts the Lord sees Him in His eternal reign of power, His unchanging and unchangeable character, and there he finds hope.

Phillips: In Psalm 102, these words are addressed to Yahweh, the personal, covenant name of the Lord in the Old Testament. What is striking about their repetition in Hebrews 1 is that here they are spoken by God to Jesus, the Son. It is God who addresses Him as 'Lord,' which is equivalent to the Old Testament 'Yahweh' or 'Jehovah.' Indeed, in the light of the New Testament, we must see both halves of Psalm 102 as applying to our Lord Jesus Christ. *He* is the afflicted man pouring out His lament before His Father. It is *His* voice, as He faces and then takes up the cross that we hear crying out (Ps. 102:3-4, 8). Jesus, in His humanity, knew what it was to have His days cut short, to die too young, afflicted and despised by men, and abandoned by even His friends. Crucified in shame, He died a cursed death, with all the bitterness and darkness a man can experience. The second half of the psalm constitutes heaven's response to the anguished cry of the Savior. Yes, as man He was cursed and rejected and died on the cross, but as resurrected and exalted Son, God says to Him: 'But you, O LORD, are enthroned forever' (Ps. 102:12). Yes, the world may have crucified you, but I have enthroned You! Psalm 102 is a wonderful portrait of what the resurrection and ascension of Christ are all about.

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a) *Jesus Is Eternal Creator (1:10)*

¹⁰And, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands;

Schreiner: The Son is greater than the angels because He created the earth and the heavens. Metaphorical language is used to depict the creation of the world. The Son laid the foundations for the earth as a builder erects the foundation for a building. The heavens, which here represent the sky and the sun, moon, and stars, are fashioned by the hands of the Son, as an artist fashions a vase or a sculpture. The creative work of the Son was accomplished at the beginning, when history began, when the heavens and earth were created. The language echoes Genesis 1:1 where God is said to create the heavens and the earth at the beginning (cp. also Pr. 8:22-31). All of created reality was made by the Son.

b) *Jesus Is Eternal Lord (1:11-12)*

¹¹they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, ¹²like 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.”

Schreiner: The created world is temporary and will not last forever. In verse 11, it stands in contrast to the Son who is eternal and remains forever. Creation is compared to a garment that grows old as time elapses, as it is subject to the elements and wear and tear of everyday life. The temporary character of the present creation is also taught in 2 Peter 3:10, 12. The changelessness and eternity of the Son demonstrate His divinity, indicating that He shares the same identity as God (1:3). God never changes in character (Mal. 3:6; James 1:17) and will always fulfill His promises. The author anticipates 13:8 where he proclaims that Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Schreiner: Verse 12 reiterates and drives home what was said in 1:11. The created world will come to an end and will not persist forever, but Jesus as the Son will never change and is eternal. The author portrays the end of this world as a cloak that is rolled up. The same Greek word ‘roll up’ (*ελισσω*, *elissō*) is used elsewhere to denote the cessation of the present creation (Is. 34:14; Rev. 6:14). In Hebrews the present creation comes to an end, just as one rolls up a cloak when it is no longer useful (cp. 12:27). The created world is compared to a garment that wears out and changes over time. By way of contrast, the Son remains the same. He does not grow old or grow weary or wear out, but as 13:8 powerfully affirms, He remains the same forever. The passing years do not detract from His person, for He does not grow ‘older’ with the years. The world as it is now is temporary and evanescent in contrast to the Son who is unchanging and never ending.

Hughes: 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. In contrast, angels, because they are created, are temporal (though Christ has apparently willed to keep them immortal) and changeable and dependent. 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 unchanging—‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever’ (13:8).

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MacArthur: Just as you would roll up and throw away an old, worn-out garment when you are done with it, Jesus one day will discard the heavens and the earth (cp. 2 Pe. 3:10; Rev. 6:14). The creation will be changed, but not the Creator (13:8). Men come and go. Worlds come and go. Stars come and go. Angels were subjected to decay, as their fall proves. But Christ never changes, is never subject to change, is never subject to alteration. He is eternally the same. He is therefore superior to the angels in title, in worship, in nature in existence, and finally in destiny (vv. 13-14).

5. A Superior Destiny (1:13-14)

a) *Jesus Sits (1:13)*

¹³*And to which of the angels has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?*

Schreiner: The author cites Psalm 110:1 to demonstrate that the Son is greater than the angels, for the Son sits at the right hand of God, reigning with Him; no privilege like this was ever given to angels. The contrast with angels is paramount, for the OT text is introduced with the words, ‘Now to which of the angels has He ever said....’ The rule given to the Son was never intended for angels. Psalm 110 is clearly a favor for the author. The psalm verifies one of the fundamental themes of the letter. Jesus’ priestly work is finished, and hence He now reigns as king at the right hand of God. The author finds it incredible that the readers would turn away from the forgiveness achieved once for all by Jesus as the priest-king and latch onto the law and its sacrifices to experience forgiveness of sin.

Bruce: The seventh quotation, which clinches the argument, consists of the opening words of Psalm 110. The language of the oracle, ‘Sit at my right hand,’ has already been reflected in the wording of verse 3, where the Son of God is said to have ‘sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high’; now it is expressly quoted. Like the first of these seven quotations, it refers to the king’s enthronement, and carries with it the promise of victory over all His enemies. The New Testament uniformly interprets Psalm 110 as messianic, and applies it to Jesus. When Jesus asked how the scribes of His day could say that the Messiah was David’s son, whereas the opening words of Psalm 110 acclaimed Him as David’s Lord, the messianic interpretation of the psalm was evidently common ground to Him and them.

Phillips: In verse 13 we find yet another great psalm, the last of the Old Testament citations used to uphold the supremacy of Christ in Hebrews 1. Verse 13 shows us the opening words of Psalm 110. Psalm 110 is the most frequently quoted psalm in the New Testament, because of what it tells us about where Christ went when He departed this earth in glory, and what He is doing now. To be told, ‘Sit at my right hand,’ signifies a singular honor and dignity. It shows rank and power and authority in the kingdom. 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.

Phillips: Hebrews says that Christ will sit at God’s right hand ‘until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’ Who, then, are Jesus enemies? The curse of the law, sin, Satan, the worldly powers, death, the grave—these are Christ’s enemies (cp. 1 Cor. 15:24-26). During His earthly ministry, He advanced into the ranks of His enemy, casting out demons, purifying leprosy, bringing healing to the sick, exposing hypocrisy, opposing false teaching, humbling the proud, cleansing the temple of moneychangers, and all the while calling sinners to faith and

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repentance. It is especially in the extension of the gospel that He now overcomes His foes as men and women come to saving faith in Him. In the end, He will have no enemies left standing. Christ our Lord sits enthroned at God's right hand until His enemies become His footstool. This is the goal of His activity, after which He will present His triumph to God the Father. And then He will reign forever and ever (cp. Rev. 11:15).

Hughes: 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). Jesus even quoted it Himself and applied it to Himself at His trial (Mk. 12:36). It is Psalm 110:1, which is quoted here in verse 13. 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 Ps. 2:12) and for the victor to put his feet on the captive's neck so that the captive became his footstool (see Jos. 10:24). One day every knee will bow before Christ, and every tongue will confess that He is Lord (Phil. 2:10-11; cp. 1 Cor. 15:24-25). And all the angels will be in that number, both good and evil, for the Son is infinitely their superior.

MacArthur: First we see the destiny of Christ, and then that of the angels. No angel has ever been promised a place at God's right hand. Only the Son will sit here. The destiny of Jesus Christ is that ultimately everything in the universe will be subject to Him. Jesus Christ, in God's plan, is destined to be the ruler of the universe and everything that inhabits it.

b) *Angels Serve (1:14)*

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

Schreiner: By way of contrast, angels do not rule but serve. They are sent by God to carry out His wishes. Indeed, they are not greater than human beings but subservient to them, for they carry out God's bidding for the salvation of human beings. Angels are identified as 'ministering spirits' (*λειτουργικά πνεύματα, leitourgika pneumata*), underscoring that their role is to serve. The ministering function of angels is underscored throughout the verse, for they are commissioned to fulfill the will of the one who sent them. Their service is for the sake of human beings, for angels do their work for 'those who are going to inherit salvation.' The salvation of human beings is conceived of here as eschatological, as something human beings will receive on the final day.

Bruce: The most exalted angels are those whose privilege it is to 'stand in the presence of God' like Gabriel (Luke 1:19), but none of them has ever been invited to sit before Him, still less to sit in the place of unique honor at His right hand. All of them, the highest angels as well as the lowest, are but servants of God, 'ministering spirits' (a phrase which echoes the language of Psalm 104:4 as quoted above in v. 7), and not to be compared with the Son. More remarkable still, their service is performed for the benefit of a favored class of human beings, the heirs of salvation. That these should be the beneficiaries of angelic ministry may well be due to their close association with the Son of God, by whom they are being brought into glory. The salvation here spoken of lies in the future; it is yet to be inherited, even if its blessings can already be enjoyed in anticipation. That is to say, it is that eschatological salvation which is in view here.

MacArthur: Notice the destiny of God's angels in verse 14. Jesus' destiny is to reign. The angels' destiny is to serve forever those who are heirs of salvation. What a wonderful, awesome

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prospect for Christians! In addition to being forever in God's presence, our destiny is to be served by angels forever.

Hughes: In contrast to Christ's superior ruling vocation, the angels' vocation is that of serving. This does not mean their serving is a disgraceful vocation. Far from it! It is a sublime privilege. The point here is, however, that it is inferior to the Son's vocation of ruling the universe.

Phillips: The angels are servants who are sent: the risen Christ is the Lord who sends. What a comfort it is to now that our Lord is so busy on our behalf from His heavenly seat of divine authority. We may never know when He has sent angels to minister to us in time of need, to thwart spiritual antagonist, and to strengthen us in times of weakness. Like the chariots of fire that surrounded the prophet Elisha, how many times do we receive unseen help from those ministering spirits that Christ sends to us?

6. Jesus' Superiority Summarized

Schreiner: The supremacy of Jesus as the Son is the theme of this section. Jesus' sonship is tied to His being the Davidic king and the ruler over the world. The divinity and the humanity of the Son are both central to the argument. He rules as the Davidic king and as one who is fully divine. The angels worshiped Him when He was raised from the dead and exalted, and as God He rules over all. Indeed, the Son is the eternal and unchanging Creator. By way of contrast angels are servants, carrying out God's will. Since the Son is superior to angels, since He is divine and rules over all, why would the readers consider returning to a revelation (the Mosaic law) mediated by angels?

Bruce: The Son of God's ascendancy over angels has thus been asserted and confirmed by the testimony of Old Testament scripture. Some of the Old Testament passages adduced, and especially the first and last (Psalms 2:7; 110:1) were already well established in the church as messianic testimonies, and were acknowledged as having met their fulfillment in Jesus. In them Jesus was addressed by God in terms that surpassed the honors enjoyed by the mightiest of archangels, who indeed are called upon to pay Him homage in recognition of His sovereignty over them. And the authority of the gospel which the readers of this epistle had embraced was the authority of Jesus, the Son of God, supremely exalted by His Father. As God had no greater messenger than His Son, He had no further message beyond the gospel.

Hughes: So to the beleaguered Jewish believer who was being tempted to say that Christ is an angel and thus escape persecution, God's Word issues a clear call: Christ is superior to angels because He has a superior *name*—He is Son; a superior *honor*—all the angels worship Him; a superior *status*—He is Sovereign King; a superior *existence*—He is eternal and unchangeable; a superior *vocation*—He rules the universe. In respect to Christ's angelic superiority, all angels have been sent by Him and are perpetually being sent out to help God's people—one after another. The message to the harried, trembling church of the writer's day, and to the Church universal is this: Our superior Christ has assigned His angels to minister to us. And if He wills, He can deliver us anytime and anywhere He wishes. Christ is superior to everything. He is adequate in our hour of need. We must believe it and trust Him with all we are and have.

Phillips: This concludes the sevenfold exposition of the supremacy and deity of Jesus Christ in verses 4-14—seven Old Testament passages that prove His superiority to angels. How fitting that this portrait concludes with Jesus seated at God's right hand, for that is where He is now, reigning as Lord over and on behalf of His bride the church. He is a sufficient Savior, worthy of

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our trust and praise. In these verses we see three divine attributes applied to Jesus Christ: eternity, omnipotent power, and immutability. Each of these attributes gives us compelling reasons to trust Him as our Savior. 1) Ours is a Savior who was there from eternity, when the worlds were born (v. 10). Here is a rock on which we can stand assured. And yet He came into this world as one of us; He took up humanity that He might make a place for man in eternal heaven. Even now He opens a door for all who would come to God through Him. 2) Furthermore, our reigning Lord wields omnipotent might, overcoming all the enemies that oppose His reign, enemies that also enslave and afflict us. And yet it was through the greatest weakness that He lifted the heaviest burden, even the weight of our sins. It was because He submitted to the cross in all its agony and shame that God raised Him to the position of glory and authority. On the cross Jesus showed His worthiness to reign in might forever, and therefore God has crowned Him Lord of all. From God's right hand He is able to help us in time of need and save us unto eternal life. 3) Finally, our Savior is immutable-that is unchanging and unchangeable: 'You are the same, and your years will have no end' (1:12). 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever' (13:8), and therefore we may always turn to Him with confidence for salvation. He is never going to change His mind about us or lose His power to save us. What is there you might need but the risen and reigning Lord and Savior is the answer? There is nothing you might face, nothing you might lack, nothing you might need in all your weakness and sin and human frailty, that is not found abundantly in Him who loves you and gave Himself for you and now reigns forever as Savior and Lord, who remains the same and whose years shall have no end.

For next time: Read Hebrews 2:1-4.