

INTRODUCTION

Last week we started the new verse-by-verse series through Hebrews. I've been preaching for forty-six years, but I've never preached all the way through this book. There are many powerful passages in Hebrews I've preached from, but I've never walked verse-by-verse through it, so I'm excited about our adventure.

The title of our series is EYES ON JESUS, because we are going to be learning some powerful truths about the person, power, and prominence of Jesus. To me the climax of the book is in chapter 11 where we learn the names of those who are in God's Hall of Fame of Faith. Then as we move into the twelfth chapter, the writer challenges us. He writes that since we are surrounded by so great a crowd of witnesses, we should run with patience the race that is set before us. And that's what we are doing every day, we're running the race that is the Christian life.

This race isn't a sprint; it's an ultra-marathon. And we aren't competing against each other. When I think about this race, I always smile when I remember the joke of the two guys out in the woods hunting squirrels and they came up on a big old hungry bear. They emptied their rifles into the bear, which only made him madder. They turned to run from it as it started chasing them. They were running for their lives. One of the old boys started kicking off his heavy hunting boots so he could run faster. His friend running beside him said, "Man, it's no use kicking off your boots, you can't outrun that bear." His friend kicked off his second boot and said, "I don't have to outrun that bear, I just have to outrun you!"

The Christian race isn't a competition; in fact, we should be encouraging one another as we run the race. And the key to staying in the race is our focus verse for the series, Hebrews 12:2, which says, "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."

Today we're going to fix our eyes on Jesus and discover WHY He is superior to the angels. We're going to read Hebrews 1:4-14. But before we do, let's sing that little chorus again: "Turn your eyes upon Jesus; Look full in His wonderful face; And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.

Hebrews 1:4-14. "So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father'? Or again, 'I will be his Father, and he will be my Son'? [That would be zero] And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him.' In speaking of the angels he says, 'He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire.' But about the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.' He also says, 'In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain

the same, and your years will never end.' To which of the angels did God ever say, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'? [Again, that would be zero] Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"

That passage might have seemed a little convoluted for you, so let me break it down into bite-sized pieces. The writer quotes seven passages from the Old Testament and applies them to Jesus. You may know that the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, but about 150 years before Jesus showed up at Bethlehem, the Greek rulers wanted to be able to read the Old Testament in their own language so seventy scholars were commissioned to translate the entire Old Testament into Greek. Because there seventy translators, it is called the Septuagint, and is designated by the Roman numeral for seventy, which is LXX.

This was a very important document, because Greek was the language spoken by most of the people during the 1st Century. And all of these seven quotations from the Old Testament we just read are from the Septuagint, not the Hebrew Old Testament.

Like a good attorney, the writer is going to lay out a solid case for WHY Jesus is greater than the angels. He presents five arguments. You may be thinking, "What's the big deal? Of course, Jesus is greater than angels. Why even argue the point?"

It's because when this letter was written, there were Hebrew believers who were slipping away from their faith. They were thinking about sliding back into Judaism and angels play prominent roles in Judaism. By presenting these five arguments, you and I can come to a deeper appreciation and higher adoration of who Jesus really is. So let's put our EYES ON JESUS!

1. JESUS HAS A GREATER NAME THAN THE ANGELS

We read, "He became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs."

There are many names used in the Bible for God. Two little boys were talking about God. One of them said, "Do you know what God's name is?" The other one said, "Sure. His name is Andy." The first one said, "Andy? How do you know?" The other kid said, "We sang about him at church yesterday, 'Andy walks with me Andy talks with me.'" Well, God's name isn't Andy. The best name for God is Jesus. And His name is superior to the names of angels.

It's Bible trivia time. How many angels are given names in the Bible? The answer is three.

The only archangel, which means "leader angel," is Michael. The name Michael means, "who is like God." The second angel named in the Bible is Gabriel, and his name means, "God is great." The third angel named in the Bible is actually a fallen angel, Lucifer, and his name meant "morning star."

The name of Jesus is greater than the name of any angel. It means "God saves." Don't you love the name Jesus? Gloria Gaither was right, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. There's just something about that name. Master, Savior, Jesus—like the fragrance after the rain. Kings and kingdoms will all pass away, but there's something about that name."

2. JESUS IS GOD'S SON; ANGELS ARE GOD'S SERVANTS

The Bible says, "To which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Again, the answer is ZERO. Nada. Zip. This letter was being written to believers who had probably heard some false teachers claiming that Jesus was just a powerful angel, but He certainly wasn't God. And there are many voices today telling us Jesus was less than God. Our Muslim friends claim Jesus was a great prophet like Moses or Abraham. I remember when I first heard George Harrison singing, "My Sweet Lord." I thought, "Wow! He's a Christian and he's singing about Jesus!" I sang right along, "I really want to see you! I really want to know you." Then as the song went on he identified his Lord as the Hindu deities Krishna, Vishnu, Brahma, and others. But Hindus would tell you that song is about Jesus because Jesus was an incarnation of Krishna, but they would never acknowledge Him as the one true living God.

The writer makes it clear Jesus wasn't just an angel or other lower being. God never said to an angel, "You are my Son." But when Jesus came up from the being baptized, God spoke from heaven and said, "This is my beloved Son whom I love. Listen to Him!"

The angels are called "the sons of God" when they are described collectively. Job 1:6 says, "One day the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them." (HCSB) But no individual angel is ever called a Son of God. That title is reserved for Jesus alone.

Angels are a hot topic today. If you Google the word angel, you'll find over 1 billion links. Some people claim they have been touched by an angel, while most of them are just a little touched in the head. In the next message, I'll be talking about who angels really are and what they do. I'll be trying to clear up a lot of folklore and fantasy about angels.

But for now, let's remember that the main role of angels is to serve. They serve God, and according to Hebrews 1:14, they also serve those who will inherit salvation. So don't go looking for angels. Put your eyes on Jesus, God's Son.

3. JESUS IS WORSHIPPED; ANGELS WORSHIP HIM

Our text says, "When God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him.'" The word firstborn here doesn't refer to birth order, but it refers to rank. Colossians 1:15 says Jesus was "the firstborn over all creation." To say Jesus was God's firstborn might imply that God had other sons. But firstborn was a legal standing that signified the one who would receive the main inheritance from the father. Can you think of an example in the Old Testament where the son who was actually born first wasn't the firstborn and received the inheritance? You are probably thinking about Jacob who was born second to Esau, but he

really tricked his father out of the inheritance. A better example would be Solomon. He was tenth in the birth order, but he received the throne from his father David.

Angels should never be worshipped. But we know there was a dangerous practice in the early church concerning the worship of angels. In Colossians 2:18, Paul warns to stay away from false believers who require you to practice asceticism, worship angels, or depend on strange visions. (ESV)

In the Book of Revelation, the Apostle John is escorted by an angel through a vision of the end times. On two occasions he was so overwhelmed that he fell down to worship the angel. On both occasions the angel had a holy fit and said, "Don't worship me! I'm just an angel. Worship God!"

When Jesus began His ministry, a fallen angel, Satan, tempted Him. Satan showed Jesus all the riches of the world and said, "All this will be yours if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus pulled out the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God and quoted Deuteronomy 6:13. He said, "It is written, 'Fear the Lord your God and serve him.'" (NKJV)

Was Jesus ever worshipped during His time on earth? We read that the Magi came and brought Him gifts and bowed down and worshipped Him. Jesus didn't say, "Don't worship me, Worship God." When Jesus walked on the water and got into the boat, the Bible says the disciples worshipped Him. He didn't say, "Don't worship me, worship God." When Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, people were waving palm branches and shouting Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." The Pharisees had a holy fit that Jesus was being worshipped so they said, "Rabbi! Rebuke these people who are worshipping you!" I think Jesus might have smiled a little when He said, "If they keep quiet, the stones would cry out in praise." I think He was referring to the prediction of Isaiah 55:12 that says that the mountains and the hills will break forth into singing, and the trees of the fields shall clap their hands."

Now, if only God is worthy to be worshipped, and Jesus accepted worship, what would that make Him? God. So we should be worshipping Jesus as well, because He is God. So put your eyes on Jesus and worship Him.

4. JESUS WILL RULE FOREVER; ANGELS ARE HIS SUBJECTS

The Bible says, "But about the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.'" Now, if you understand that God is speaking here, He calls Jesus God. In other words, God calls Jesus God. How can that be?

That is the mystery of the Tri-unity of God. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There's only one God. The Father is God, Jesus is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. That concept is beyond our ability to completely comprehend. But I always quote how John Wesley described the Trinity. He said, "If you can explain to me how there can be three candles in a room, but only one light, then I will explain to you the Trinity."

Some people try to claim that the Bible never calls Jesus God, but they are wrong. He is referred to as God many times in the Bible. Jesus told the man delivered from the demons to go home and tell the great things that God had done for him, and he went about telling the people what Jesus had done—no difference. Thomas said to Him, "My Lord and my God." Titus wrote about looking for the Blessed Hope, which is the "glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."

As God, Jesus will rule the universe forever. There are some people in the U.S. who prefer that our politicians be restricted by term limits. It's an interesting debate. But for sure, there is no term limit for King Jesus. He was never elected and He can't be voted out of office. Jesus will rule and reign forever and then forever and ever.

In 1741, George Frideric Handel was a composer who was deeply in debt and sinking into depression. He took it upon himself to put selected passages of scriptures to music. He called it "The Messiah" and he wrote the entire oratorio in 24 days. He hardly slept or ate. There is a story that as he was completing the Hallelujah Chorus, his servant knocked on his door, but received no reply. He reported that he entered the room and Handel had his head down on his composition. When he looked up there were tears in his eyes. He lifted the Hallelujah Chorus and said, "I have seen the face of God."

There's a story that when King George II first heard the Hallelujah chorus he stood. And even to this day, when the Hallelujah Chorus is sung, people stand, not to emulate the act of an earthly king. But to show honor for the heavenly King of Kings and Lord of Lords as the choir sings the words straight from Revelation 19. "And He shall reign forever and ever." Jesus rules. Keep your eyes on Him!

5. JESUS IS THE CREATOR; ANGELS WERE CREATED

Again, we read these words spoken to Jesus, "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands." As we saw in last week's message, Jesus was present at the creation. Angels were also present because Job tells us they shouted for joy when the foundations of the earth were laid. But Jesus was never *created*; He *is* the Creator.

Do you know what that means? The next time you read the Declaration of Independence you could read it this way, "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal and are bestowed by JESUS certain unalienable rights."

But this passage also says one day this earth and these heavens will grow old and wear out like a tattered garment. Have you ever had a piece of clothing that you liked so much that you wore it for years? Maybe you wore it so much that it finally just wore out. A man had a favorite sweatshirt that he wore all the time. He had never done the laundry and one weekend his wife was away visiting her parents. He called her up and said, "I want to wash my sweatshirt, but what setting do I use on the washing machine?" She said, "Look on the shirt. What does it say?" He said, "Ohio State."

So what will Jesus do when this heaven and earth wears out? This passage says He'll just fold up the old heaven and old earth like you would roll up an old bathrobe that is too tattered to donate to Cornerstone or Goodwill. He'll toss it aside and do what He does best. He'll create. He'll create a New Heaven and a New Earth.

Here's how the Apostle John describes this new creation. "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'" (Revelation 21:1-5)

Heaven is for real, not because of the book or the boy. Heaven is for real because of what the Bible says. We'll see Jesus, our loved ones who were saved, and we will serve Him forever.

I love the quote by C.S. Lewis: "There is no need to be worried by facetious people who try to make the Christian hope of heaven ridiculous by saying they do not want to 'spend eternity playing harps.' The answer to such people is that if they cannot understand books written for grown-ups they should not talk about them." (*Mere Christianity*, p. 106)

CONCLUSION

Jesus is greater than the angels. Have you figured it out yet? It's all about Jesus. "West Side Story" is not my favorite musical, but I do love the song "Maria." When I was a kid, we had a record album of Andy Williams singing songs like "Moon River," and "To Dream the Impossible Dream." But "Maria" was my favorite. Nobody could sing that song like he did. Check it out on YouTube sometime—but not now.

In the musical, Tony meets and kisses Maria and he breaks into song, "Maria, I've just met a girl named Maria. And suddenly that name will never be the same to me. Maria. I've just kissed a girl named Maria. And suddenly I've found how wonderful a sound can be! Maria! Say it loud and there's music playing. Say it soft, and it's almost like praying. Maria. I'll never stop saying Maria. The most beautiful sound I've ever heard. Maria."

I feel the same way about the name of Jesus. Once I met Jesus, everything changed. Suddenly that name will never be the same again. Jesus! Say it loud and there's music praising. Say it soft, and it really IS praying. Jesus. I'll never stop saying, Jesus. The most beautiful sound I've ever heard. Jesus!

Jesus is greater than any other person who has walked this planet, because the Bible says God has exalted Him and given Him a name that is exalted over every other name in the universe. That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and

every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to glory of God the Father! Keep your eyes on Jesus because He is greater than the angels.

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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