



## Sermon Notes

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Title: The Preeminence of Christ

#2 in Series on the Book of Hebrews

1. Some key words and phrases to keep our eyes open to:
  - a. Jesus is better...
    - i. Better revelation (cf. Heb. 1:1-4)
    - ii. Better hope (cf. Heb. 7:19)
    - iii. Better priesthood (cf. Heb. 7:20-28)
    - iv. Better covenant (cf. Heb. 8:6)
    - v. Better promises (cf. Heb. 8:6)
    - vi. Better sacrifice (cf. Heb. 9:23)
    - vii. Better possessions (cf. Heb. 10:34)
    - viii. Better country (cf. Heb. 11:16)
    - ix. Better resurrection (cf. Heb. 11:35)
  - b. "Heavenly calling" (6 times)
  - c. "Let us..." (11 times)
2. The superiority or preeminence of Jesus... (cf. Heb. 1:1-4)
  - a. Revelation over religion
    - i. In the original Greek, the first four verses are one sentence which contain some of the most elegantly written Greek in the New Testament.
    - ii. The Bible sets itself up as a revelation from God to men. Contrary to religions like Buddhism which contends that *"revelation [is] not as a personal intervention of the Absolute into the worldly realm of relativities but as an enlightenment gained through discipline and meditation."* The Bible never assumes that it is dealing with religion when religion is understood as human ideas about God.
    - iii. We believe God has spoken to us (through the prophets and angels) and has made it clear that we are to do such actions in obedience to the message we've received from God. We believe that God has revealed Himself to us through the revelations of the Old Testament scriptures and in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.
      1. The author of Hebrews writes in Heb. 1:1-2, *"... [God] in time past [spoke] to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son..."*
      2. 2 Cor. 4:6b, *"... the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."*
  - b. Over the prophets. For the Jews, God had spoken for centuries through the prophets (*definition of prophecy*) which pretty much include most of what we now call the Old Testament.
    - i. God has spoken through many prophets and many types, persons that characterized God or pre-figured Christ, for the purpose of redeeming His people.
    - ii. Jesus is the image of God, not just a figure or type. We believe that there is no source as reliable as Jesus to reveal to us the nature and person of God; it cannot be improved upon.
      1. Heb. 1:2b-3, *"His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness [radiance] of His glory and the express image of His person, and*

*upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high"*

- a. Note some the extremely profound doctrinal beliefs in these verses: Jesus is the express image of God, Jesus upholds all things, our sins are purged by Him, and all is finished as He sits on high.
  2. *Jn. 14:7, "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."*
  3. *Col. 1:15-20, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross."*
- iii. There is no other prophet superior to Christ; there is no message that can perfect the Word Incarnate of God. It simply means that *for Christians* there is no authentic knowledge of God beyond that revealed to us in Christ Jesus. Our self-definition, our identity, stands and falls with Jesus as the full and final revelation of God.
1. Islam – *"There's no God but Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet."* 600AD
  2. Mormonism – *"He is revered as a prophet that brought forth the fullness of the gospel in modern times."* 1835AD
  3. JWs – *"Thus the Bible is an organizational book and belongs to the Christian congregation as an organization, not to individuals, regardless of how sincerely they may believe that they can interpret the Bible. For this reason the Bible cannot be properly understood without Jehovah's visible organization in mind. – The Watchtower, October 1, 1967, p. 587"*
- c. Over the angels. The author shifts to a series of seven quotations from the Old Testament. He considers the point of his quotations to be quite clear since he makes almost no interpretive comments. All but one of the quotations come from the Psalms, the hymnbook of both synagogue and early church; they were sung regularly in early Christian and in Jewish worship. There is a noteworthy parallel between statements of faith about Christ in verses 2-4 and the quotations in verses 5-13. The quotations found in verses 5-9 deal with appointment as royal Son and heir. The quotation of verse 10 speaks of a mediator of creation. Those found in verses 11-12 reflect on the unchanging, eternal nature of Christ, and the quotation of verse 13 mentions the exaltation to God's right hand.
- i. Many Jews had a superstitious or idolatrous respect for angels, because they had received the law and other tidings of the Divine will by their ministry. The Jews looked upon them as mediators between God and men, and some went so far as to pay them a kind of religious homage or worship. Thus it seems necessary that the author should insist, not only on Christ's being the Creator of all things, and therefore of angels themselves, but as being the risen and exalted Messiah in human nature, to whom angels, authorities, and powers are made subject. To prove this, several passages are brought from the Old Testament. On comparing what God there says of the angels, with what he says to Christ, the inferiority of the angels to Christ plainly appears.
1. *v. 5a* is a quote from *Ps. 2:7*; this was the verse that the voice from heaven spoke to Jesus at his baptism.

2. v. 5b is a quote from 2 Sam. 7:14 which had been a promise to David that David's son would be the one to build the temple and form a dynasty that would endure forever. Since the Davidic dynasty had come to an end with the Babylonian Exile, intertestamental Jews wondered how God would restore his promise to David's line and the passage developed messianic applications.
  3. v. 6 is a quote from Dt. 32:43; the author was quoting from the Greek Old Testament which is different from the Hebrew text which makes no mention of angels. The "*Him*" of the Greek Dt. 32:43 would have been God himself, but the author interprets "*Him*" as a reference to Christ.
  4. v. 7 is a quote from Ps. 104:4; referring to angels as winds and flames emphasizes their temporary status as opposed to the eternal nature of Jesus.
  5. v. 8-9 is a quote from Ps. 45:6-7 which was originally written for a royal wedding. The throne of God is forever and the scepter of his kingdom is a scepter of righteousness. As a result God has anointed (and appointed) the king with the oil of gladness beyond your companions. If one could imagine the angels as the companions of God's son, his anointing goes far beyond theirs.
  6. v. 10 is a quote from Ps. 102:25-27; an obvious scriptural description of the role of Christ as creator. The author saw the sustaining role of Christ over creation in the comparison of the world to clothes that the Lord folds and puts away. But while clothing may change, Christ is the same and his years never end
  7. v. 13 is a quote from Ps. 110:1; Jesus himself had quoted Ps. 110 in Mt. 22:44, Mark 12:36, and Luke 20:42-43.
- ii. The angels are to be ministering spirits to those will inherit salvation. Not only is Christ superior to the angels, they are servants, not beneficiaries, of the plan of salvation. Angels exist for our sake and we exist for Christ's sake. (cf. Ps. 91:11)
3. Therefore...
- a. The principal theme of the book is the superiority of Jesus which is an essential doctrinal understanding for every Christian. Upon Jesus, the Cornerstone, all the religions of men are crushed. Our faith in God is founded upon revelation by Him to us, neither our own efforts at enlightenment nor by our works to salvation. Christ is all in all.
  - b. Religion can be easier than revelation, and less costly. It is believed that it is written prior to the fall of Jerusalem to the Roman army in 70AD to Jewish Christians in Rome who were facing the best known period of persecution of the church around A.D. 65 near the end of the reign of Nero. The great fire had destroyed much of Rome in A.D. 64 and Nero, who was a prime suspect and apparently to deflect suspicion and hatred from himself, publicly blamed the Christians for the fire. From then until his death in A.D. 68 Nero was involved in periodic persecution and/or harassment of the church. Judaism was a legal and recognized religion at that time. Jews who did not believe in Christ were not in danger of persecution from Nero at that time. Christians were in that danger. It would have been a very tempting thought to Jewish Christians who were being persecuted to down play their commitment to Christ. If they would deny their faith in Christ and present themselves only as Jews (and not as Jewish Christians) they would be safe from the persecution. Then, perhaps at a later and safer date, they could pick up their commitment to Christ again. Hebrews makes best sense as an argument to prevent the first readers from being enticed into following such a tempting course of action.
    - i. The Jewish/Gentile conflict of the early church
  - c. Biblical Christianity is unapologetically exclusive and demands the utter supremacy of Christ. Jesus is the Way to the Father; when in doubt look to Him only.