

Hebrews

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Hebrews 1:4-14

- Having already argued that Christ is greater than the prophets, pointing out that the prophets could only bring the Word God had given them, while Jesus was God, the preacher now moves on to place Jesus above the angels. This is crucial because in those days the Jews had elevated angels to a place higher than scripture would bear. As periodically happens, the practice of worshipping angels was gaining momentum in the first century. Paul in Colossians 2:18 plainly warns against this.
- The problem was a growing teaching on the great transcendence of God, meaning that God was too holy, too distant for people to have any direct contact with. So high were God's thoughts, so high were God's ways, that humans were utterly incapable of encountering God directly. There was even a popular teaching in Jesus' own time, that God did not, in fact, give the law to Moses directly, but had angels deliver the Law to him. The idea of any direct communication between God and man was completely unthinkable. This is a key reason why the very suggestion that the Son of God was a carpenter from Nazareth who had been born in Bethlehem was preposterous to the scribes, rabbis, priests, and Pharisees. As this belief continued to develop and gain momentum, there was a corresponding belief that God used angels to bridge the gap between God and creation.
- Generally, some of the Jewish beliefs about angels were these. God lived surrounded by multitudes of angels (Isaiah 6; 1 Kings 22:19). At times, angels served as God's army (Joshua 5:14-15) The word for angel in both Hebrew and Greek means messenger, so it was the job of angels to bring God's word to people. The Jews believed angels were made of a fiery substance. They did not eat or drink or have children. They were thought to be somewhat immortal, but could be destroyed by God. Some of them, the cherubim and seraphim, because of their proximity to the throne of God knew more things, especially about the future, because they had overheard these things. And this is how the Jews got around God using the plural to refer to Himself as in Genesis 1:26, "Let **us** make man in **our** image...". Here the Jews thought of an

angelic senate who had input into the decisions and acts of God. They were said to have objected to the creation of Adam and Eve and many of those who objected strongest were destroyed by God. Later they objected to God giving The Law directly to Moses. They were jealous of their status and did not want to be supplanted by the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve. The Jews knew the names of some of the more important angels and they knew the responsibilities of many. There were said to be 200 angels who controlled the movements of the stars. There was an angel who kept track of time. There were angels of the sea, the forest, the snow, the rain, and thunder and lightning. There were angels who wrote down every event and every spoken word. There were angels used for punishment. There were guardian angels. There was the angle of Death. And there was the prosecutor, Satan, who continuously brought charges against the people of Creation. And all of that is just the tip of the anthology of angels iceberg. So the writer of Hebrews believed that he needed to slay this giant and show that Jesus Christ was greater than all the prophets AND all the angels. In Christianity we have direct access to God through Jesus, not angels.

- In vs. 5 he quotes Psalms 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14 to show that Jesus is God's Son.
- In vs. 6 he quotes Psalm 97:7 to show that the angels bow down and worship the first-born Son and thus are subservient to Him.
- In vs. 7 he quotes Psalm 104:4 to show that like people, angels are created beings, but whose only purpose is to serve God and His Creation.
- But in vss. 8-13 he quotes the Psalms and the prophets to show that Jesus Christ is eternal, equal with God, and is elevated far above the angels. Jesus is who is to be worshipped, not the angels.
- And in vs. 14 he asks a rhetorical question. Do not angels exist to serve those who inherit salvation? In other words, why should the saved worship creatures who exist to serve them?