

## A King Superior to Angels

I once watched a presentation which tried to show the size of our sun next to some other stars. Our sun was first shown next to the Earth, with the Sun looking about the size of a beachball, and the Earth, the size of a marble. Then our sun was placed next to some larger stars, and our sun was the size of a marble next to Sirius, about the size of a tennis ball, Pollux the size of a soccer ball, and Arcturus, the size of a beach ball. But then it continued. This time, Arcturus was the size of a marble, Betelgeuse the size of a soccer ball, and Antares the size of a beach ball. At this scale, our sun was the size of a grain of sugar next to Antares. That's the power of comparison. If I started by telling you that Antares was a really big star, it wouldn't have nearly the same effect on you than if it was shown by comparison just how much bigger it is than our sun, and our world.

This power of comparison is used throughout the book of Hebrews to the same enormous effect. The writer of Hebrews is an expert in comparison. The reason he uses the tool of comparison is because of his goal: he wants to establish Jesus as superior, so that we will remain faithful.

Chapter 1:5 through to chapter 10:18, the writer wants you to see that Jesus is the Finisher of the faith, and then the last three chapters to tell you to be faithful to the finished faith.

Jesus is the completion, the fulfillment, the full and final form of every partial form of God's revelation before that. God has mediated His Word and His rule and His presence through three groups: prophets, priests, and kings. Messiah is the one person in history who unites all three offices in one person: the king-priest-prophet.

He takes the most space to deal with the notion that Jesus is the superior priest (4:14-10:19). He deals with Jesus as the superior prophet in 3:1 to 4:13. But his first choice, in chapters 1 and 2, is to deal with Jesus as king, Jesus the ultimate and final king.

Seeking a king is behind some people's almost total faith in political parties. Seeking a king is behind celebrityism and the worship of famous people. Seeking a king is behind fans and followers on the web. To greater or lesser degrees, people seek someone to admire, someone to imitate, someone to conquer their problems or enemies, someone to follow. It's certainly behind all false worship and false gods.

But the writer of Hebrews wants us to know there is only one ultimate and final king. That isn't as immediately obvious as we might like. After all, the word *king* doesn't appear in the first two chapters. But it doesn't have to, if the idea is there. What the writer does is something that a first-century Hebrew mind would recognise as all about kingliness, but might be less recognisable to us. He doesn't compare Jesus to the greatest of Israel's kings, David, or Solomon, or Hezekiah. Instead, he compares Jesus to the beings that the Hebrews most likely to be considered royal rulers, princes, kings, and that is angels.

Now to help you understand that, we need to step aside from our text for a few moments, and do a bit of angelology. We need to understand who these beings are, if the comparison between them and Jesus is going to have its intended effect. If what you have in your mind when you think of angels are some rather effeminate looking men, wearing white bathrobes, then you'll hardly be gripped at the idea that Jesus is superior to angels. If you are thinking of the figures in medieval paintings, little cherubic babies with blonde curls and oversized cheeks, you'll miss the power of this comparison.

Instead, Scripture teaches that angels are kingly beings. Consider four ways that the Bible teaches them to be kingly beings: their titles, their appearance, their power, and their authority.

## 1) Angels Are Kingly in Title

We use this word *angel* as a kind of group name for many different spirit beings. Four NT Scriptures (1 Cor 15:24, Eph 1:21, Eph 6:12, Col 1:16) give us list of titles, that seem to differentiate between different classes of angelic beings. We read of seven different groups. But listen to the titles of these seven groups: Rulers (sometimes translated Principalities), Authorities, Powers, Dominions (or Lords), World Powers, Spiritual Forces, and Thrones. Now if I told you that there were some beings, and their title was Power, Lord, Ruler, Throne, Authority, what kind of being would you think they were?

We think of these rather effeminate beings, but Scripture calls them the lords, princes, barons, dukes, of the universe. This is cosmic royalty. In fact, so kingly are these beings, that on more than one occasion, they have an even greater title.

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. (Job 1:6)

7 When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:7)

God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the gods. (Ps. 82:1)

They are the sons of God, and they are even called gods.

Lordly under-rulers of the present cosmos, these are galactic barons and dukes, heavenly princes over starry domains. If we saw one, we would bow, and rightly so.

## 2) Angels Are Kingly in Appearance

We turn back to Ezekiel for just one manifestation of these beings.

13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches going back and forth among the living creatures. The fire was bright, and out of the fire went lightning. (Ezek. 1:13)

Ezekiel could best compare these beings to the hot white, blue and red of coals burning. Picture a being whose very skin or clothes gives off iridescent light.

Later on in Ezekiel, the Lord describes the chief of his angelic beings, and how he appeared:

12 "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

13 You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes Was prepared for you on the day you were created.

14 "You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. (Ezek. 28:12-14)

When we see a coronation, we marvel when the monarch wears the crown jewels for a few hours, actually carries the sceptre. Here is a being whose very skin or scales is made of precious material. Colour and light mingles and flows from him in ways that must be mesmerising to behold, like beauty you cannot get enough of.

Daniel says something similar.

**Dan 10:6** His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude.

Beryl is slightly opaque and slightly transparent, so we have this glorious light coming through these beings. A face like the piercing silver or purple plasma that flashes through our sky. When he speaks, it is as if that one voice is repeated and echoed a hundred times.

**Rev 10:1** I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire.

**Rev 18:1** After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.

I suggest if we saw just ten of these, we would conclude this was a council of gods, kings that make our kings look like they wear paper crowns.

### **3) Angels Are Kingly in Power**

Without turning to each of the passages, let me remind you of several moments in the Old Testament. After David sinned, God sent an angel through the city of Jerusalem. One angel, who killed 70 000 people, and was actually poised to wipe out the whole city. In 2 Kings 19, we read of the mighty army of the Assyrians, poised to destroy Hezekiah's Jerusalem. One angel moves through them in the night, and 185 000 men lie as corpses in the morning.

When Job is about to be tested, Satan is able to move and control the weather of the Middle East, bringing targeted lightning strikes to wipe out Job's animals, targeted wind storms to collapse a house on Job's children

In Book of Acts, we read of angels that walk into prisons, cause chains to fall off, open locked doors, cause guards to be sound asleep.

And this is all nothing compared to the angels of Revelation, whose power will destroy the Earth's seas, fresh water, the light sources, fire, bring diseases, famine.

Just one of these beings could defeat the combined forces of all the world's military forces. What could tanks, fighter jets, nuclear missiles do against a being that can travel at the speed of light, control the weather, destroy thousands of people in a single blow, bring catastrophic plagues and events, appear and disappear.

These beings are kingly in title, in appearance, in power, and fourthly

### **4) Angels Are Kingly in Authority**

Do these beings actually have authority? Do they actually rule and reign?

13 "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. (Dan. 10:13)

20 Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come. (Dan. 10:20)

Three times Jesus refers to Satan as "the ruler of this world" (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). When tempting Jesus, Satan said, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. (Lk. 4:6)

Paul calls him the "god of this age" and "the prince of the power of the air". For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this

age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. (Eph. 6:12)

John writes in 1 Jo 5:19 We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

Angels exercise real authority, real rule over affairs.

Here we have beings whose titles suggest royalty. We have beings whose appearance would cause any human to wish to worship in almost instinctive admiration. We have beings whose power could, if they wished and were allowed, could subjugate all the people of the Earth in forced submission and obedience. We have beings who already direct the affairs of the world in ways we seldom know.

It would not be surprising if the fallen and rebellious of these beings were the god-kings of the pagan nations. The Zeus, Apollo, Hermes of the Greeks, or the Odin, Thor, Friga of the Vikings, the Ra, Set, Osiris of the Egyptians. Paul goes on to tell us in 1 Corinthians 10, that the gods which Gentiles have worshipped throughout history have actually been demons, some of these powerful spirit beings, fallen.

If we did not know the Creator, the true Tri-une God, these would be the most likely ones we would think of as the kings of the cosmos.

But now, using the method of contrast, the writer of Hebrews contrasts Jesus with these kingly beings. He is not expecting you to think lightly of angels; he wants you to think of them as mighty. And with them on the one side, he now presents to you the Incarnate Son on the other. He is not comparing angels to the Second Person of the Trinity before His Incarnation. It would be pointless to compare the infinite, undivided Triune God with angels. But there could be some doubt that the Incarnate Son, Jesus of Nazareth is truly superior to these kingly beings. So in chapter 1 and 2, the writer makes three contrasts between Jesus of Nazareth and these kingly beings.

## **I. Jesus is More Kingly in His Title**

5 For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"?

Angels are called many things, as we've seen: Rulers, Principalities, Authorities, Powers, Dominions (or Lords), World Powers, Spiritual Forces, and Thrones. They're even called gods. They're even called sons plural.

But, asks the writer, to which individual angel, did God ever say, "You are My Son, Today I have begotten you?"

The expected answer is, none. For this title, Son, is a title of unique honour. It means that the Kingly Father is recognising among all contenders one Man as His true heir and the prince. This one, the Father says, is not one of my great dukes, or barons, or lords, whose glory I delight to see on display when they are gathered together. Among the millions, perhaps billions of my spirit beings with their orders, ranks, classes, stations and hierarchies, this one is not simply the highest of them, the arch-angel. No, this is, as it were, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. This one is the brightness of my glory, the express image of My person. This is My Son.

Now, when did the Father say this of the Son? Again, this is important, because the comparison is not being made with the Second person of the Trinity before Bethlehem. The comparison is being made with the Incarnate Jesus. Paul, preaching in a synagogue in Antioch, applies Psalm 2 to His resurrection: 33 "God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.' (Acts 13:33)

At the Resurrection of Jesus, where He was vindicated of sin, triumphed over the grave, defeated Satan and his hosts, it was at that moment that the Father said to the Incarnate Son, to the God-Man, to Jesus of Nazareth: you, before all these squadrons of the sky, before these cosmic princes, I declare you, Yeshua of Nazareth are my Son.

The second quotation in verse 5 also has to do with kings. It comes from 2 Samuel, where God is establishing the Davidic covenant. He is promising David that his throne will in fact be the one kingly line that never ends. That's a pretty grand statement. After all, the longest dynasties go for a few hundred years before being replaced by another family. But God says to David, if your son, and your son's son are faithful to me, I will own them as my own, I will be a father to him as king. Well, we know that David's royal line began failing with the first one, Solomon, and it continued to fail, until being cursed by God when it came to Jeconiah. But Jesus was descended from David through Mary, through the line of Nathan, and his adoptive father Joseph was descended through Solomon. And at the Resurrection, God could say of Jesus: perfectly faithful, truly my Son.

With all their rank, all their dignity, all their exaltedness so that Jude even tells us that Michael spoke respectfully to Satan when in dispute with him, with all that, Jesus has a title exponentially more royal than they: Son. Feel the contrast: thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, rulers, all stand aside in humble awe and deference to the one who is called Son. He is the final and ultimate King.

## II. Jesus is More Kingly In His Position

6 But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "**Let all the angels of God worship Him.**"  
7 And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels **spirits** And His **ministers** a flame of **fire.**"  
8 But to the Son *He says*: "Your **throne**, O God, *is* forever and ever; A **scepter** of righteousness *is* the scepter of Your **Kingdom**. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has **anointed** You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions."  
10 And: "You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. 11 They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment; 12 Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not fail."  
13 But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? (Heb. 1:5-14)

Notice the deep contrast. Look at verse 8. The writer is quoting psalm 45, a royal messianic psalm that records Solomon's wedding. The writer sees one kinglier than Solomon, more beautiful than Solomon.

Four words which describe the Son's position: *throne, scepter, kingdom, anointed*. The Son has a throne, the Son has a scepter, the Son has a kingdom, the Son is anointed.

But the angels are not said to have a kingdom, or be the anointed ones, or have sceptres. And while some of them are called *thrones* plural, none of them ever received the position described in verse 13.

And notice what kind of throne the Son has in verse 8: Your throne is forever and ever. This throne is an eternal one. In fact, the Son's position is unlike Solomon's in that Solomon lived between 74 and 80 years. But verses 10-12 tells us that the Son's kingly position is not affected by time and decay. The Son created the world, and so stands apart from its decay. He is the king eternal. But the angels are part of creation. And while they are not mortal, they are creatures within creation. But this king is the king eternal. He was kingly in position before the world by nature, and now he is

kingly in position by earned right.

13 But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"?

Again, quoting from a royal psalm, Psalm 110, the writer says that the Father says to the Son, and I think this refers to the Son after His ascension: sit in the place of special honour, the place of unique glory, until I have subjugated everyone who doesn't bow to your rule.

To which of the angels did God give that special place, and say He would make their enemies eventually bow before them? None. This is a kingly position.

Now look at the contrasts in position with kingly angels:

6 But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "**Let all the angels of God worship Him.**"  
7 And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels **spirits** And His ministers a flame of **fire.**"

14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? (Heb. 1:14)

What is the position of these kingly beings next to Jesus? Verse 6: they are to worship Him. They are spirits, servants. Verse 14, they are serving spirits, sent to serve those who are the Bride of Jesus. Remember, we are talking about beings whose appearance reminds humans of lightning, whose voice remind us of crowds, who can destroy thousands in a moment, who can control the very weather and elements. These beings, as kingly as they might be in power, they worship this king, they serve this king and His bride.

How kingly must He be! 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. 22 And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, (Eph. 1:20-22)

More kingly in title, more kingly in position, and here is the third contrast.

### III. Jesus is More Kingly in His Inheritance

5 For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. 6 But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him? 7 You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And set him over the works of Your hands. 8 You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing *that is* not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. 9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. (Heb. 2:5-9)

While angels appear to have authority in this world, the world to come will not be their inheritance. The world to come, which begins in the Millennium, and continues into the New Heavens and the New Earth, will in fact be subjected to mankind. So in verse 6-8, the writer quotes Psalm 8 which rejoices not in how insignificant man is, but in how significant man is. When one considers the glory of the created order, while it makes one feel small, the flip side is that it proves the importance of mankind. Man must be special to have this place in such a world. God making mankind to be His image-bearers who are meant to inherit and rule the world for God's glory. That was the original design of Genesis 1.

But verse 8 reminds us that now, in our fallen state, the curse reigns, the world ages, man lives in

danger and under constant threat. When Adam sinned, man as it were handed control of the world over the Satan. This world went from being something ruled by King Adam into something ruled by the rebel king Satan.

So part of the plan of salvation is that God would become man, and call man to join Him. Jesus, the Second Adam died to pay the penalty for sin, faced the justice for Adam's rebellion, rose again, conquering death, conquering the curse, and now calls men to give up the thing which lost them their dominion in the first place: their rebellion against God. Those who believe on Christ become part of His race, and it is the new humanity, the redeemed humanity who will inherit the earth. The redeemed will fulfill Psalm 8, having all things under our feet.

But why? Only because Jesus, became lower than the angels, into the form of man, to win back our lost inheritance, so that we will one day, at His side, judge angels, and receive the full inheritance of a glorified earth.

Jesus is not only the Creator of the world, owning it once, but He is also its Redeemer, the Second Adam, which means He stands it inherit it, owning it twice.

Angels may rule sections of it. Angels may be princes of Greece and Persia. But angels do not stand to inherit it all. But how kingly is Jesus, if every atom of this cosmos is owned by Him twice: His creation, and His inheritance.

The writer of Hebrews says, Jesus is the Finisher of the Faith. Compare Him to the kingliest beings in creation, and He is kinglier in title, kinglier in position, and kinglier in inheritance. There is no king greater than He.

Whom do you admire? Whom do you follow? Whom do you seek to imitate? Whom do you trust to conquer? Look nowhere else for a king. The King of Kings is Jesus Christ.