

1. Recently, God laid on me the idea of teaching the Book of Hebrews. For a long time, I thought of this book as a study for Jewish Christians who were slipping back into Judaism as opposed to just trusting in Jesus for their salvation. While technically, that is a big part of why this book was written, what amazed me was how much it applies to all people as well as those with a Jewish background. This book has things that can teach anyone about our relationship with Jesus.
  - a) Let me explain this book another way: The book of Hebrews is in effect a list of things to compare to Jesus. The theme of this book is essentially, "If one believes in Jesus and other supernatural things, let me tell you how Jesus compares to those other things." The main point of Hebrews is to teach us exactly who Jesus is, and why we are trusting in Him for our salvation. The focus of the book is not just about having faith in God, but explaining who exactly is the object of our faith. It is teaching us exactly who Jesus is and is not.
  - b) So why is this important if we already believe in Jesus? Because sometimes we can have misconceptions about who Jesus is and what was His purpose. Hebrews is in effect a case study of who Jesus is, in comparison to other things we as believers consider important.
2. With that little speech out of my system let me now start over, and give an important quote from the Old Testament that is a key verse to understanding the book of Hebrews. That verse reads: "But the righteous will live by his (or her) faith". (Habakkuk 2:4b NIV, parenthesis text added.)
  - a) That is actually half a verse, which is quoted three times in the New Testament.
    - i) First it is quoted in the book of Romans. That book focuses on the topic of who is righteous (i.e., in good standing) before God. Notice righteous is in Habakkuk 2:4.
    - ii) Next that verse is also quoted in the book of Galatians. That book focuses on the topic of how the Christian "will live". Again, notice "will live" is in Habakkuk 2:4.
    - iii) Finally, that verse is also quoted in the book of Hebrews. The central focus of this book is on the topic of "faith." The point in Hebrews is not about having faith, but understanding whom it is and what it is we are having faith in.
  - b) This leads me to explain a common mistake Christians make: We may say to someone else, "I can't do what you do, because my faith isn't that strong." Now think about Jesus' statement that, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you." (Luke 17:6, NIV)
    - i) Jesus is saying in that verse that if one's faith is as small as a mustard seed, one can say to a large mulberry tree, be uprooted from the ground and go into the sea.
    - ii) The false idea is that it takes a lot of faith for a big miracle to happen like making a tree be uprooted from the ground. Miracles are about God's will being done, not the size of the request. For any miracle to be done; it is not the size of our faith that makes that miracle happen but if it is God's will, simply being done.
    - iii) My point here and a key point of the book of Hebrews, is that it is not the amount of faith we have that makes a difference in life. The important thing to consider is what is the object of our faith. The book is about understanding who Jesus is and why it is God the Father wants us to have faith in Jesus.
3. Suppose we already believe Jesus is God. Why should I study this book, if the main point is to teach us about having faith in Him? That is because of the constant danger all believes face of slipping back into trusting in Jesus and our own ability to deal with situations. Let me explain:
  - a) Hebrews reminds us that the secret to living the Christian life is not by trying harder to please God, but to fully trust Him to guide our lives and rely upon His power to make a difference in this world. Hebrews teaches us why the Old Testament was necessary and then explains why the New Testament is complimentary in what it teaches. The New Testament explains the necessity of both the "Old and New" for Christians to understand.

4. At this point, let me give the "who, what, when's and why's" of the book of Hebrews.
  - a) Let's start with the question of who wrote this book. Bible scholars have debated over authorship for the 2,000-year history of this book, as the author is not stated in this book.
    - i) Many scholars argue that Paul wrote it, but because many Jewish people at that time didn't like what Paul taught, he did not sign it. However the style of the book is different from Paul's other letters so scholars debate who is the author.
    - ii) The main "pro-Paul" argument is that we know Paul wrote Romans and Galatians, and these three books, (again, Romans, Galatians and Hebrews) all quote that half a verse from the Old Testament which state that the "righteous shall live by faith". Therefore, many scholars argue that Paul wrote this and didn't sign it.
      - a) In fact, when the New Testament was first organized as a single book in the 4th century, most of those early scholars argued for Paul as the author.
    - iii) Again, the truth is nobody knows for sure. I tend to lean toward the "pro-Paul" camp, but if I discover one day in Heaven I am wrong, it won't bother me.
  - b) Next, let me briefly focus on the "where" question:
    - i) This is another debate question because the text does not state anything about where it was written or to where it was delivered. Most argue it was written to Jewish believers in Jesus who lived in Israel. Note that the title of the book is not in the book itself. Since the early church recognized this book as written primarily to Jewish Christians, it was commonly called "To the Hebrews" or just "Hebrews".
  - c) Finally, let me give a brief "when" statement: Scholars tend to be in agreement over this issue. At the time Jesus lived, there was an official main temple in Israel that existed for centuries. Roughly 30-40 years after Jesus died and was resurrected that temple was destroyed by the Romans (70AD) in a famous war between the Romans and the Jews.
    - i) My point is this book was written prior to that destruction because the latter chapters mention the process of worship in this temple as if it was still there.
    - ii) Since this book discusses Jesus in detail, we know it must have been written after His resurrection and after some growth of the early church. Most scholars place this book in the "late 60's", or roughly 30 years after Jesus' death and resurrection.
  - d) Understand that if one is bored, one can read lots of scholars give all sorts of reasons why this or that person wrote it, or speculate about where or when it was written. Know that this is speculation and accept it as such. My personal view on studying Hebrews is not to focus too much on things we don't know, but to focus on why the book was written: To teach people exactly what it is (or better yet, who it is) we are having faith in.
    - i) In other words, the purpose of the book of Hebrews is to teach us why we are trusting in Jesus for salvation and what it exactly means to trust in Him.
5. OK, John, now that I know the purpose of the book is to understand what it is we are to have faith in, what is the opening chapter about? Remember that this lesson is mainly about the first chapter. Therefore, let me talk a little about chapter 1 and why it starts like it does.
  - a) To understand the Book of Hebrews, understand that reads like a dissertation on who Jesus is. Think of the book of Hebrews as a speech that starts off by saying Jesus is superior to this aspect taught in the Old Testament and then it continues to another aspect along similar lines. The book is designed to teach us who Jesus is and is not.
  - b) Consider what a tough sell this book must have been to someone of Jewish faith. If a religious Jew believed they were saved by being a good person and obeying the law, consider how difficult it is to convince them or anyone for that matter that salvation is not based on being a good person, but by trusting in Jesus' complete payment for one's sins.
  - c) This leads me to chapter 1. The first three verses give an overview of the entire book. Then chapter one focuses on why Jesus superior to the angels. This leads me to my lesson title, which is "understanding who Jesus is superior to, as He is God." As we go through Chapter 1, that concept will become obvious.

6. If one is going to explain to people who have some knowledge about the true God, that Jesus should be the center of one's faith, one needs to explain about Jesus in relation to that history of how God has worked through the nation of Israel. That in effect is how the book starts.
  - a) After a three-verse introduction, Chapter 1 then focuses on Jesus' relationship with angels.
    - i) It teaches how Jesus was not an angel, and in fact if Jesus is God, then He must have created the angels as well as created the rest of the world.
    - ii) The chapter in effect teaches us why angels exist, what is their purpose and what is their relationship to Jesus and to us.
    - iii) If Hebrews lays out a series of arguments of who Jesus is "superior to", it focuses on what is "up there" and then works its way down to what is "down here". That is why angels are discussed first. Technically they are second as Hebrews starts off by discussing the relationship between God the Father and Jesus Himself.
    - iv) Therefore, one can think of the structure of this letter as working its way from "top to bottom". The top being God the Father, then what else is in heaven (angels), and finally about Jesus relationship with other "religious things" on earth itself.
  - b) OK enough of all of this. It's time to actually start Hebrews Chapter 1 itself.
7. Hebrews, Chapter 1, Verse 1: In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,<sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.
  - a) Let me start by saying there is a lot of theology in the first three verses of Hebrews, and I am going to spend some time discussing these three verses in detail before we even deal with the subject of angels beginning in Verse 4.
  - b) Chapter 1 is only 14 verses long. Therefore, I am taking the time for a detailed discussion of these three verses and that will not prevent me from getting through the whole chapter. Remember that the chapter breaks and verse numbers are not part of the original text, but were added many centuries later for our reference to more easily find a specific passage.
  - c) OK, that's enough background. Let's look at Verse 1. The key point is that this verse starts by saying in effect that God has spoken to people many times and many ways prior to Jesus coming in this world. John's loose translation of this verse: The Old Testament was given to us over many centuries and written by many different people.
    - i) Let me explain it this way: If you wanted to convince people that the bible is the word of God, one way to do it is to have it written over a long time span by lots of different people. Then, have that collection of books be consistent in its theme, and be filled with predictions that are proven to be true by studying history.
    - ii) Let me try this one more way: Other religious books give lots of good wisdom on how to live one's life. However those books are not full of predictions that have also come true over time. How do you prove the bible was written outside of time as we know it? By writing history in advance. That in effect is what the bible is: A history book written before that history has occurred as well as a book to teach us how to live the type of life that God desires we live.
  - d) Notice what Verse 1 does not say: Who was the author, where it was written, or who was the recipient. Think of writing a letter: Usually we start a letter by saying who the letter is address to or list who the letter is from. Because there is no such information either at the start or at the end of this letter, there is much speculation about its authorship.
    - i) The book of Hebrews assumes the reader also has some familiarity with the Old Testament. That is why the letter starts by saying "In the past God spoke to our forefathers". That is why we know the letter is written to those with religious Jewish backgrounds, based on how this letter starts.
  - e) Next, let me discuss the phrase "many times and many ways". The point is there are many authors of the Old Testament. God did not speak the same way to each of them. Each book also reflects the style of each author. That in effect is the "many ways".

- f) It is also important to discuss the word "prophets". We tend to think of a prophet as a person who can correctly know the future before it happens. While that is one definition of prophecy, the biblical term is greater in scope. The word prophet as used in the bible refers to a person who has had a direct revelation from God to share with others.
- g) That leads to two important questions: How do we know these bible books were direct revelation from God and two, how does that differ from when God makes His will known to our lives? Good questions. Let me try to take them on here:
  - i) As to how did people know those writings were prophetic the short answer is they were full of predictions that came true after the books were written. Just about every Old Testament book discusses history that can be verified. We know the bible is God inspired because archeology and history prove it is true.
  - ii) Does that mean the bible books were not immediately accepted as the Word of God until after they were proven to be true? We don't know. We do know that with some of the writers, they were leaders in Israel and therefore the people who lived under that leader knew the recent history to be true. For the writers who were not leaders, history proved them to be true after those events happened.
  - iii) OK John, so the books were historically accurate. How does that make the bible to be the word of God, as opposed to an accurate history book that anyone can write?
    - a) I asked that question once to one of my bible teachers. He said he believed people just knew it was the word of God. Yes it was historically accurate. Yes it taught history in advance. Yes it taught us principals of how to live. It was that combination of things and the fact that once God reveals Himself to us in our hearts, we accept those books as being God inspired.
    - b) There have been a number of times in history where scholars questioned every book whether or not it belongs in the bible. Based on their findings, what we have today is generally accepted as God inspired.
  - iv) I still have to answer the question of why should I trust in the "prophets" (writers of the Old Testament) as opposed to just trusting in God to guide my life? The answer is we know the Old Testament is the word of God and we don't always know that if our intuition is in fact God guiding us. Next, when we do get what we believe is revelation from God, it would never contradict the bible. Further, what God reveals to us, is usually just for us. What God reveals in His word, is a message for all people to study.
- h) These are all neat points and good background information. What do they have to do with Verse 1 of the book of Hebrews? The answer is to accept the fact that God has spoken through the writers of the Old Testament. What the writer is leading up to is the fact that since that time, God has spoken to us directly through Jesus Christ.
  - i) Does that mean Jesus is not mentioned in the Old Testament? No, in fact there are over 300 Old Testament predictions that tie to the events of Jesus First Coming. Those same scholars also count over 600 Old Testament predictions about His Second (future) Coming, but we'll save that discussion for another day.
  - ii) What the Book of Hebrews is going to make the argument for is that even though God did speak through various prophets in the Old Testament. After Jesus came into the world, He spoke to us directly, which is another way of describing the four gospel accounts. Does that mean I can stop studying the Old Testament and just read the New? Hardly. In fact, I believe one can learn about what God expects from us as Christians in the Old Testament just as much as one does in the New Testament. To misquote a famous biblical principal, "The Old is explained in the New, but both are necessary to understand God's purpose for our lives."
- i) All of this leads very well to Verse 2, which explains Jesus' relationship with all things created, included the writers of the Old Testament. I'll explain that one in a moment.

8. Since it's been pages since I even listed Verse 2, it might be good to restate that verse here, now that I've described it in context of Verse 1. Verse 2: "but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."
- a) I had to include both verses together a few pages back as they are all part of one sentence.
    - i) Verse 1 gives the comparison of Jesus to the Old Testament writers.
    - ii) Verse 2 explains who Jesus is in contrast to those Old Testament writers.
    - iii) What does that mean? It means that God picked certain people in the Old Testament who had the privilege of sharing about Him to the world. In Verse 2, we learn that it was Jesus Himself who was part of that "revealing".
    - iv) What does that mean? It means that Jesus was greater than the Old Testament writers because He was the one who created everything in the first place and Jesus is the Messiah ("Eternal King") as predicted through out the Old Testament.
  - b) What if we already believe Jesus is God and created everything? Why should I care about Jesus' superiority to the Old Testament writers? Remember the intended audience: Those with Jewish backgrounds. The answer given to them is the danger is also a danger for us:
    - i) That is, trusting in our own ability to do the right thing as opposed to trusting in God's ability to guide and direct our lives. In order to prevent slipping back into a wrong way of thinking about God, first we need to establish who Jesus is, and then we establish why He is greater than all of the concepts described in this book.
    - ii) To understand why we trust in Jesus and not our own abilities, first it is necessary to establish the background of who or what Jesus is "greater than". The first step in that process is to show how Jesus is greater than the Old Testament prophets. How the book of Hebrews proves that issue, is my next topic.
  - c) Before I go any further, I need to explain the term "last days" from Verse 2. This is both an Old Testament and a New Testament term to state the "Time of the Messiah". For a religious Jew, the last days would be the time frame when the Messiah (again, an eternal king) would be revealed to the world. To a Christian, it is the time frame since Jesus was resurrected, leading up to the time when He comes back to rule over the world.
    - i) OK, John, it's now about 2,000 years since Jesus came to earth. How can this time frame be the "last days" if it has been going on this long? Another good question.
      - a) One has to think in context of recorded history. The text is saying in effect God has worked different ways through different periods of time. Before there was a Jewish nation, God revealed Himself to specific individuals. Later Israel became God's primary witness to the world. Now in these "last days" God speaks directly to us through Jesus (through the whole bible).
    - ii) Does that mean God is done with the Nation of Israel? Many Christians believe that is true. I don't believe that and neither do a lot of Evangelical Christians. The fact that Israel is a country again after roughly 2,000 years is one of many reasons why I am convinced that God is not done with the Nation of Israel.
    - iii) This leads me back to the phrase "last days". Even though this is a 2,000-year time frame and counting, it is still the last days in comparison to all of human history.
      - a) So how long will the "last days" last? The New Testament makes it clear that only God the Father knows when this time frame ends. (See Matthew 24:36 or Mark 13:32 on that issue.) My point is one cannot get revelation from reading the bible nor from an angel as to when that time frame ends. So why is it such a long time frame? God is waiting for as many people as possible to be saved before He "pulls the trigger" to wrap it up.
  - d) The text also implies that Jesus did not speak to us, until the New Testament. In a direct sense, we had no revelation of Him until that time frame. In an indirect sense, since Jesus created everything (we'll get to that), He has already spoken to us through all of the Old Testament writers and that is one of the points being implied within these verses.

- e) With all of that said, it is time to start discussing who Jesus "is" at least as stated and as implied here in Verse 2. This verse calls Jesus "God's son". I need to explain that too:
    - i) To understand what "God's son" means, first one has to understand that term refers to rank, not an actual birth. Let me give a classic Old Testament example:
      - a) In the Book of Jeremiah (31:9), God refers to Ephraim as a firstborn son. Ephraim is one of the 12 tribes of Israel. He was also the second born son of Joseph many centuries before Jeremiah was written. (See Genesis 48:14). The point here is Ephraim was not a firstborn son, but a title given to him.
    - ii) The point of this little exercise is that Jesus always existed was given the title "firstborn son". It is a reference to rank of importance, not an actual birth.
  - f) Before I move on, I want to explain the concept of how the God who created everything could become a man and still be God. I heard a great story recently that fits well into this principal: The story is about a woman who wrote a fictional book. The writer fell in love with the main character she created in her book. Therefore, the writer decided to add herself as a character in the book so that she could marry the main character.
    - i) OK John, that's cute. Your point? God put "Himself" in what He created because of His love for what He created. God Himself became part of what He created, so He could show us how much love He has for us. (Story related by Tim Keller.)
  - g) OK, time to actually finish Verse 2. The rest of the verse says, "He appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe".
    - i) Coming back to the term "first born", it also means in effect one is in charge of the family possessions. If a parent has more than one child, the Old Testament teaches the first born son is to be in charge of distribution of what the parents give to the children. That firstborn son gets a double portion for that duty of being in charge. This is based on Deuteronomy 21:17 and other places in the bible.
    - ii) My point is not that Jesus gets twice as much as everyone else. The point is Jesus is God the Father's appointed "first born" and therefore, Jesus is in charge of all things. If God made Jesus "first born" (again a title), that means that Jesus gets to decide who is going to spend eternity with Him forever. That title also means in effect Jesus distributes what belongs to our Father to all of us who trust in Him. That means all of us who trust in Jesus share in all that belongs to the Father.
    - iii) The rest of Verse 2 simply makes the point that all things were created by Jesus. This will become important as we start to discuss angels and other created things in this book in comparison to their relationship with Jesus.
  - h) To summarize the first two verses, the main point is that God Himself decided to enter the world that He created. That summarizes this multi-page discussion of the first two verses in one thought. Hey look, there is a Verse 3. ☺
9. Verse 3: The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.
- a) Verse 3 says that Jesus is an "exact representation " of the Father's essence. What does that mean? Does that mean that Jesus looked exactly like God the Father when Jesus was here on the earth? No. It means that if we want to understand whom God the Father is, and what He desires of us, all (big emphasis on all) we need to study God the Son (Jesus) to understand God the Father. It is another way of saying in effect we cannot do an "end run" around Jesus in order to get to God the Father.
  - b) The second point of Verse 3 is that God's word is the power that sustains our world.
    - i) One has to understand the concept of God's word being in effect the same as God's power. The idea is that God the Father created all things through Jesus and God the Father "holds together" all things through Jesus. Let me try to explain this scientifically in order to grasp the concept of God holding the world together:

- a) If one ever played with magnets, one knows that two positively charged magnets repel against each other. Two negatively charged magnets do the same thing. If one ever physically pushed two positively charged magnets toward each other, it takes a little force to push them as those magnets have their own force that avoid wanting to have contact with each other.
  - b) That same principal applies to positive and negative charged electrons that make up every atom in the universe. Scientists speak of a mysterious force that they call "atomic glue" that holds the atom together despite the fact that they naturally want to repel away from each other the same way those positively charged magnets want to repel away from each other.
- ii) OK John, you are talking about magnets and atoms and I don't see what any of this has to do with Verse 3 here in Hebrews. The point is in effect that God is that "atomic glue" holding all atoms together and the entire world together. That is the idea behind God sustaining all things by the power of His word.
  - a) If this is confusing, consider the concept that God not only created the world, but He is the one in effect, holding it all together for us.
  - b) And your point is? Once again, it is about understanding the power of God and understanding the power behind the God that we worship.
- c) Meanwhile, back at Verse 3: The next point is how Jesus died for all of our sins and now He sits at God the Father's right hand. I would say that requires some commentary:
  - i) First of all, I always assume my audience consists of people who already believe Jesus is God, so I'll be brief on this point. What I do want to emphasize is why that point is being made here about Jesus dying for our sins.
  - ii) Think of it this way: Jesus was given the title "Son of God" so that we understand that He is superior to all created things, including angels, which we will get to in about a page or so. So if Jesus is God, why was it necessary for Him to die for the sake of all sins? Couldn't God have said, "you over there, "Mr. Angel" or you over there, "Mr. Adam", would you mind going into the world and dying for the sake of all humanity so that the price for all sin is paid?
    - a) The point is that the only way a perfect God can be perfectly loving and perfectly just at the same time is for God Himself to pay the price for sins.
    - b) If God told Mr. Angel or Mr. Adam to go suffer for our sins, it would not be fair to make them suffer for our sins. That would not be loving by God to make them to suffer even if they agreed to it. However, if He Himself paid the price for sin, then God Himself is showing us how much He loves us by suffering Himself for our sakes. At the same time He is showing justice is necessary in order that justice be done, for the sake of sins.
  - iii) OK John, I sort of know all of that. Why is it emphasized here in Verse 3? It is to understand not only Jesus' purpose for coming into the world, but to show His superiority to other created things. That is why the rest of this chapter is going to emphasize how Jesus is superior to other created things, including angels.
- d) The last point of Verse 3 is simply that once the price for sin is paid, Jesus "sat down" at God's right hand. Know that sitting at a ruler's right hand is symbolic of being second in power. (With my apologies to all left handed people. ☺)
  - i) What I pondered is, if God is everywhere, how could Jesus literally be sitting next to Him? I don't believe God as an old man sitting in a chair.
  - ii) This gets back to the concept that Jesus is both fully God and fully human at the same time. If Jesus is still a man, then God the Father needed to create a physical place where we as resurrected beings can spend eternity with them.
    - a) Therefore, when we get resurrected, we do go to a created place (that is what we call heaven) where we can be with God forever.

- iii) Does this mean Jesus is sitting in some chair in heaven that we can go and visit after we die? I wonder if it is so. The bible does not give details of what heaven is like. The bible is in effect a manual on how to live now. God in effect tells us, "Let Me worry about heaven, you focus on living to make a difference for Me now".
  - iv) So instead of worrying about what heaven is like and where Jesus "is" in heaven, let us focus on what the text does say: Once the price for sin was paid, Jesus sat down in heaven. So why is that emphasized here?
    - a) The idea is that God's work is done. Let me give an illustration. We may be watching a sporting event and get all excited as we don't know what is going to happen next. From God's all knowing perspective, that sporting event is over and therefore He can sit in heaven knowing that the results are already completed.
    - b) In other words, the emphasis is on the fact that God's work in the world is already completed. We don't know what is going to happen next, but God already knows everything. Therefore He can "sit down" which is symbolic of resting since He already knows everything. That means He doesn't worry about what is going to happen to us, say next week.
    - c) The point for us of course, is that if God the Son is "relaxing" then why are we worrying about the outcomes of our lives? Yes we don't know what is going to happen next and have to make the best decisions possible. Still, if Jesus is "done" and is now sitting in heaven, that is a reminder to us to not worry about our life, because in effect, everything is already done.
10. Verse 4: So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.
- a) I promised this chapter focused on angels, and now we actually get around to that topic.
  - b) First know that the purpose of the first three verses among other things is to show how Jesus is superior to other created beings. That is why it was necessary to spend so much time explaining the concept of what "God's son" means and how that makes Jesus' rank superior to that of angels as well as people. The text here says in effect that Jesus "name" is superior to angels. It is not that Jesus became superior to them, but that what He did is superior to what angels accomplish in our world.
    - i) To understand this transition, one needs to understand the historical aspect of angels and how they were viewed in first century society. Angels were not just part of the Old Testament. Even the Romans and the Greeks with their belief in multiple gods believed that angels were the messengers of those gods.
    - ii) My point is while there is a lot of misconceptions about angels then and now, belief in angels has been around, probably as long as mankind.
  - c) So what are angels? The short version is God designed angels to communicate between Himself and us. Angels can appear in human form. The idea is if a messenger from God came in human form, it would not be as intimidating as God Himself appearing to us.
    - i) Yes angels have other purposes, but I'm stating their main function here. Somehow and somehow, these creatures help to intercede in God's plans for us.
    - ii) Also remember that angels have freewill. Satan was a top angel and chose to rebel against God and many angels joined that rebellion. Why did they rebel? We don't know for sure, but I suspect it was about their "ego" as they wanted to be the focus of God's attention, and not humans. We'll find out one day for sure. For references to these facts see Ezekiel 28:13-15 and Revelation 1:20 and 12:4.
  - d) To get back to the verse, the point is Jesus became much superior to the angels in terms of His status before God the Father. This gets to the idea that Jesus became a "lowly human", but because He was still fully God, He received a much higher rank because of His willingness to die for our sins. That in effect is the point of this verse.



11. Verse 5: 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"?
  - a) From Verse 5 to the end of the chapter, we are going to get a lot of Old Testament quotes. Remember that this book was written to people who did believe the Old Testament was the word of God. Therefore, the author of this book is going to use quotes from the Old Testament to make his point how Jesus is superior to angels.
  - b) Verse 5 has two of those quotes. The first half is taken from Psalm 2:7 and the second half is taken from 2nd Samuel 7:14. Let me discuss those references and tie them to Hebrews.
    - i) To understand Psalm 2, one has to understand that part of it is God the Father speaking, part of it is God the Son speaking and other lines are the Holy Spirit speaking. Psalm 2 is in effect a conversation between God and "Himself" where He explains His purpose for mankind through this psalm.
    - ii) The reason that particular psalm is #2 is because the first one teaches us to be obedient to God. This second one then teaches us His purpose for mankind.
    - iii) Religious Jews will argue that the Son refers to the messiah (again, eternal king), but they won't accept the idea of the messiah as God. One has to ask, how can the messiah not be God if in effect God calls the messiah His son? That is a key point in Psalm #2 and that is the point that Verse 5 is making here Hebrews Chapter 1.
    - iv) As to 2nd Samuel 7:14, God was explaining to King David how a descendant of his will become God's Son. He will be the promised messiah for the nation of Israel. The point again, is that the messiah will also have the title of "God's Son", which is a title not given to any other angel. Again, "son" is not about a physical birth, but about a rank that is higher than any other created thing.
  - c) It is probably important to remember again, that all created things were created through Jesus. That means Jesus created all angelic beings. Whenever I talk to a devout Mormon or a Jehovah's Witness, I like to bring up this issue. Both of those groups argue that Jesus was a top angelic creature that became "The Son". If Jesus created all angels, that would make Him superior to all angelic creatures. I then like to then show them Isaiah 44:24b, which states that He who created all things is God. It is a way of showing Jesus is God.
  - d) Speaking of God, Jesus and angels, let us take a look at Verse 6.
12. Verse 6: And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."
  - a) This verse a quote of the Greek translation of Deuteronomy 32:43. That Greek version was commonly used when the Hebrews was written. Our English bibles are translated directly from the original Hebrew. My point is it reads a little different from our bible.
  - b) As to the verse itself, the idea is that all of heaven will rejoice when God takes out His vengeance on those who refuse to acknowledge Him or acknowledge His people.
    - i) Let me explain that: The point of verse is simply that we can count on God to take vengeance on those who want to harm us. That may occur through our lifetime or through His judgment process. The point here in Hebrews is simply that angels in heaven express gratitude to God over His plan to save us who trust in Him.
    - ii) OK John, so what? The point is this verse shows how Jesus is superior to angels in that all of the angels praise Jesus in His role as God's "avenger".
13. Verse 7: In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire."
  - a) Before I discuss this verse, let me share where it was taken from: Psalm 104:4.
    - i) Know that Psalm 104 focuses on reasons why we should praise God. One of those reasons is because He made angels for the purpose of helping us get His will done. Remember that we established that Jesus is God, and therefore Jesus was part of the "creator" that made the angels in the first place. With that said, let me now take a moment to explain a little more about the function of angels.

- b) In this verse, angels are compared to winds and flames of fire. It does not mean that angels are literally winds or flames of fire. It refers to how they act. Let me explain:
    - i) We don't know how wind works. We can see trees being shaken by the wind, and experts in the weather may understand patterns, but generally we don't know which way a wind will blow. Just like the we don't know, say a year from now, which way the wind will blow, we don't know how God is going to work in our lives, say a year from now. Angels are what God uses "like the wind" (in an unknown way to us) to help get His will done in this world.
    - ii) Next, the comparison is to flames of fire. We tend to think of angels as only doing good things, like helping those in trouble. The point here is that angels can also be used by God to bring judgment. For example, the book of Revelation speaks of specific angels that are used to bring judgment on the world.
  - c) So why did God make angels in the first place especially if some rebelled against Him?
    - i) Part of the answer is that God knew we would have to spiritually fight against forces we cannot see or easily comprehend. Therefore, God wants to assure us that there are also angels that fight on our behalf.
    - ii) Remember God's desire is to get His will done on earth. One way God answers prayer is by using angels to help us through our difficult situations.
    - iii) So if God is all-powerful, why doesn't He just help us all individually? Why the need for angels? As I said, I suspect the answer is that if angels come in human form, it is less scary than seeing the God of the Universe directly in our presence.
    - iv) Meanwhile, the point of Verse 7 is simply that we don't truly understand how He works through angels, and that is why they are compared to wind and fire flames.
14. Verse 8: 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. <sup>9</sup> 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."
- a) Well, the Old Testament "quote fest" continues here in Verse 8. ☺ In these verses, the writer of Hebrews is quotes from Psalm 45:6-7. Notice in Verse 8, the reference to two Gods. The writer of Hebrews is using this reference in Psalm 45 to describe another God entity as well as God the Father. Remember that Hebrews is written for religious Jews, and a purpose of this book is to show that Jesus is God as well as God the Father.
  - b) My point and the point of Verse 8 here in Hebrews, is that this psalm reference is about the fact that when the Promised Messiah comes (that's an Old Testament title for what Christians believe Jesus does at His Second Coming), He (Jesus) will rule forever.
  - c) Now let's think about Verse 8 in contrast to Verse 7.
    - i) The point of Verse 7 is that angels are in effect servants of God.
    - ii) The point of Verse 8 is that Jesus is superior to angels because Jesus is God.
  - d) OK John, I am a Christian and I know all of that. Why should I care?
    - i) For starters many cults argue that Jesus was an angel that rose above the other angels in order to become God. Chapter 1 is showing us is that Jesus created all things, including angels. Therefore in that sense alone Jesus is greater than angels.
    - ii) Further, this chapter shows us the difference in what God called Jesus to be (ruler forever and ever) while angels were called to be ministers on God's behalf.
  - e) Time for a quick change of subject: When does Jesus rule forever start?
    - i) For starters, He rules forever now over those who trust in Him.
    - ii) I also hold the view that Jesus must return to rule over this world like promised in some of these psalm references stated here in Hebrews. As to when that occurs, the New Testament makes clear that one cannot find that date by studying the bible. Even the angels don't know when that happens, so one cannot say that angel told you or me when this event would occur. (Again, see Matthew 24:36.)

- f) Let me also comment on the phrase "oil of joy" as used in Verse 9.
    - i) In Jewish culture, oil was used to anoint new kings. The idea is not that Jesus will literally get oil poured on Him by God the Father. It is a symbolic way of showing how Jesus was chosen to come into our world as a human, die for our sins and come back to rule forever. (For an "oil pouring" example, see 1st Samuel 10:1.)
  - g) As one stands back and looks at this whole chapter, the interesting thing to see is how the writer of Hebrews picks verses here and there from all over the psalms and other places in the Old Testament to show that Jesus is God, He is superior to the angels and He paid the complete price for sins. While we may accept as fact Jesus is God, it is important to have a book of the bible that gives us references when we encounter members of cults or even have a discussion with someone who doesn't believe Jesus is God.
    - i) Think of Hebrews as a good place to turn to when one encounters some sort of false argument about who Jesus is. Hebrews argues against many false claims made about Jesus. Now consider that we are just in Chapter 1 of this book. ☺
15. Verse 10: He also says, "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. <sup>11</sup> They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. <sup>12</sup> 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."
- a) These three verses are all a quote from Psalm 102:25-27. Before I start to explain these verses, understand that God does not expect us to know all of these quotes. What God desires of us is a relationship with Him. What the book of Hebrews is doing is showing us arguments why Jesus is who He is, and is not. The writer uses the Old Testament to support those arguments, since religious Jews believe the Old Testament is God's word.
    - i) But John, if these arguments are so good, why don't more Jewish people believe in Jesus as God? The answer is God has blinded them (corporately) to the Gospel so that non-Jewish people can be added to the kingdom. That is one of the main points made in the book of Romans Chapter 10. Romans Chapter 11 then goes on to tell of a future day when once again God will focus on the nation of Israel and collectively many of them will turn to Jesus. Again, we don't know when that date will occur, so our job is to just be a good witness for Him now to all people.
    - ii) OK, we are studying Hebrews and not Romans. Let me get back to it. ☺
  - b) John, now tell me why I should care about this stuff? It is to understand correctly about who Jesus is and why He exists. Eventually most Christians have to face such questions and these verses teach us correctly who Jesus is compared to angels.
  - c) Meanwhile, I still have to discuss these three verses: The essential point is since the world we live in has a beginning, one day it will have an ending. Because Jesus created this world, He (and us) will exist far longer than our world will exist.
    - i) I already get the idea that Jesus is God and He will exist longer than this world exists. Why should I focus on that? Think about how much time all of us worry about things when Jesus already knows the outcome of our lives. The point to remember that eternity is far greater than the length of time we live here.
    - ii) OK John, that may be well and good, but what about my life right now? We still have problems and still have issues to deal with. The point is not to stop trying. The point is to realize that God is there, He wants to guide us through our lives and He already knows the outcome of what is going to happen to us.
    - iii) Hebrews is telling us here not to worry about the problems of this world, because in effect God is bigger than that. He (and us) will exist even long after this world and our life here is over. Therefore, we should trust in His Guidance as opposed to our ability to fix our situations at hand.
    - iv) Just when I thought I was getting off track, Verse 13 confirms these thoughts here.

16. Verse 13: To which of the angels did God ever say, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? <sup>14</sup> Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?
- a) In these final two verses, we get a quote from Psalm 110, Verse 1. Again, the writer of Hebrews is using quotes from all over the Old Testament to teach us about Jesus in comparison to angels. The most important point is not to remember where these verses are taken from but to see Jesus purpose in comparison to angel's function in this world.
  - b) Verse 13 tells us that in effect Jesus is "relaxing", that is, sitting at God the Father's right hand, until God the Father "deals with everything". The point for us being that if Jesus can sit and relax, why do we worry about our future?
  - c) Verse 14 tells us that angels (non-demonic ones) are sent to serve those who inherit salvation. Remember I talked earlier about the purpose of angels? I believe Verse 14 describes their purpose very well: They are ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation. OK, if I am saved where is my angel? Let's assume that each of us have never talked to angel. Where are they? I don't believe they work that way.
    - i) Remember that angels work for God and not for us. Yes He sends them to help our lives, but it is not the job of angels to focus on themselves, which is why we don't get literally introduced to angels guiding our lives.
    - ii) So how do they minister us? I assume they work in the background in ways that are beyond our ability to fully comprehend. I am simply grateful that there are these unseen spiritual entities that God sends to make a difference in our lives.
17. At this point, let me sum up Chapter 1, and discuss some key points to remember:
- a) The main purpose of this chapter is to show who Jesus is in comparison to angels. Even if we already believe Jesus is God, it is important to understand that He didn't rise to that rank from being an angel as taught by groups such as Mormon's and Jehovah Witnesses.
  - b) That is why this chapter gives a lot of quotes from people who believe the Old Testament is the word of God in order for us to understand who Jesus is. By the way, those groups believe the Old Testament is the Word of God, so these quotes work for those arguments.
  - c) To put it another way, I was once taught correctly that every false argument one could give about Jesus can be refuted by the bible itself. I have come to understand that fact to be true and Hebrews Chapter 1 of is a great source for refuting some of those arguments.
    - i) What I mean is most cults deny Jesus as always being fully God and at the same time He became human and always will be human. While most cults do teach some or many biblical truths, they also deny the claim that Jesus is fully God and fully man. Hebrews Chapter 1 argues against those wrong views about Jesus.
  - d) OK John, let's say my life is too complicated right now even to deal with someone from those groups. What should I get out of this chapter? It is to remind ourselves when life gets us down, that Jesus is not worrying about our problems. Jesus is watching our lives from outside the perspective of time. While we don't know what is going to happen next, Jesus does and if He is not worrying about the outcome of our lives, neither should we.
    - i) Yes we still have to make the best decisions possible, but if the God who controls the world loves us and cares for us is "sitting", maybe we too, should take our lives a little less seriously.
    - ii) With that happy ending stated, let me go to my closing prayer:
18. Heavenly Father we thank You for sending "Yourself" through Jesus to pay the price for sins. Thank You that we don't have to worry about the ultimate outcome of our lives. Thank You that we don't have to worry about our salvation. Help us to remember who Jesus is, in comparison to other angelic creatures You have created. Help us to use our lives to make a difference for You in all that we do. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.