



NG Study Guide: Hebrews 1:4-14 :: “Jesus is Greater than the Angels” [9.17.23]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. Regularly review the notes at the bottom.

The Study

Thesis: There is a fascination with angels. There are over 50,000 titles available on Amazon, and over 115 million hits on Google. A Gallup poll (2023) reported that 69% of people in the U.S. believe in angels, 55% believe they have been protected by a guardian angel, and 20% of that group identify as non-religious. The fascination with angelic beings is not new. Here, we discover that Jesus is superior to angels. Thus we should follow Him rather than angels.

Subject: Jesus is greater than the angels

Object: Follow Jesus (not angels)

Context: Book written to Jewish believers to show supremacy of Jesus to prophets, angels, Moses, Joshua, sacrificial system, priests, temple. Here 7 quotes from Septuagint (Greek translation of OT) to show Jesus is greater than angels.

In our culture, what might be some *unbiblical views* regarding angels? For example the views that angels are humans who have died, or impersonal spiritual forces, or denying their existence. The idea that cherubs are like Renaissance paintings of babies with wings. In the Bible we learn that a cherub (or plural cherubim) are a powerful group of angelic beings who guard God’s glory in heaven and on earth. Lucifer was a cherub before his rebellion and he became Satan (Ezekiel 28:14-16, Isaiah 14:12-14, Revelation 12:7-12). Since, Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:4) we should be aware of some dangers of having a fascination of angels without healthy biblical knowledge (angelology).

1. Jesus is God’s only Son (4-5)

Having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. 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”?

a. More excellent name (4)

Jesus is declared to be *so much better than the angels* (4). Preliminarily, Jews esteemed angelic beings that were loyal to God (Cf. Revelation 12 re 1/3 of angels who rebelled against God with Satan). Moses received the law on Mount Sinai through angels (Deuteronomy 33:2, Acts 7:53, Galatians 3:19). Jews tended to exalt angels as intermediaries between God and man.

Jews rightly exalt angels among God’s creation, and esteem them highly (Psalm 8:4-5). Heaven is angels’ native home (Matthew 24:36), they excel in strength (Psalm 103:20), they minister to God (Daniel 7:10), and they surround God’s throne (Revelation 5:11). Jews wrongly reasoned that if God became man he would be inferior to angels.

Jewish Christians were being told that if they followed Jesus they would be cut-off from angels. In this context we will discover why Jesus is so much better than angels. The first reason why Jesus is so much better is a *more excellent name*. The argument isn’t that Jesus is a cooler sounding name than Michael, Gabriel, or Lucifer. The sense of name is more than identity, but refers to nature, character, and title.

b. Son of God (5)

Son of God is certainly a more excellent name. Here the Old Testament references are Psalm 2:7 a Messianic psalm, *You are My Son, Today I have begotten You*; and 2 Samuel 7:14 where God promises that Messiah will be a descendant of David and will establish an eternal kingdom, *I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son.* God never calls an angel "Son" because it refers to equality with God.

Mormon and Jehovah's Witness' doctrine asserts that Jesus is a created angelic being. Their doctrine is heretical, because it denies the deity of Christ. The Greek term translated "begotten" refers to being the only one of its kind or class, unique in kind. Jesus is not a created being, but one of three persons of the Godhead including Father, and Spirit.

2. Jesus is worshipped by angels (6-7)

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

a. The angels of God are to worship Messiah (6)

Here the Old Testament quote is found in Deuteronomy 32:43. Jesus' supremacy is revealed in the declaration that the angels are to worship the Messiah (The Christ). In Revelation we see a picture of the heavenly scene where the angelic beings are around the throne worshipping Jesus (Revelation 5). Since only God is to be worshiped, it reveals that Jesus is God. When the Apostle John received the Revelation of Jesus from an angel he fell down in homage before the angel; and the angel corrected John that only God is to receive worship (Revelation 19:10). Angels are fellow servants (Revelation 22:9).

b. The angels are created beings (7)

Here the Old Testament quote is Psalm 104:4 a declaration of praise to God for His creation including angels. Angels are amazing created beings, but Jesus is Creator.

3. Jesus is God and King (8-9)

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."

a. Jesus is God

But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God... God the Father affirms that Jesus the Son is also deity (See John 1;1, 20:28).

b. Jesus is enthroned as king, but the angels merely gather around the throne

Psalm 45:6-7 is the reference. King Jesus' throne and kingdom is eternal, *forever and ever* (8). The *scepter* is the symbol of a sovereign's authority. Jesus' kingdom is characterized by righteousness, a *scepter of righteousness*. *Jesus loves righteousness but hates lawlessness*. There is literally no corruption, abuse, oppression or injustice related to Jesus' rule. He always does what is right. Lawlessness is rebellion against God and His rule in our lives. Presently, God allows man and angels to rebel and reap the consequences, but one day Christ's kingdom will be free of lawlessness!

4. Jesus is Creator (10-12)

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."

a. Creation is temporal but Jesus is eternal and unchanging (11-12) (Hebrews 13:8)

As noted in the quoted Psalm 102:25-27 Jesus created the heavens and the earth (10). Yet, the psalmist accurately notes that it is aging and will ultimately perish (11). Even before the articulation of the second law of thermodynamics (entropy) in the mid-1800s by Lord Kelvin the reality that the universe is aging and winding down is foretold. The universe is likened to a worn out garment that is folded up unusable and transformed for better (11-12). In Revelation 21 the Apostle John describes the vision, "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" (Revelation 21:1). Thus, despite the longevity of the Universe it is moving towards its decline and demise.

In contrast, Jesus is *the same* unchanging (immutable) (12). His *years will not fail* because He is eternal and unchanging.

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). The same God that created humanity for relationship with Him has not and will not change. His love, mercy, goodness, grace, justice, holiness, righteousness and majesty have been consistent and shall be consistent from before time began through eternity.

5. Jesus directs the angels as they serve (13-14)

But to which of the angels has He ever said: “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”? ¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

a. Jesus is Sovereign (13)

Psalm 110:1 is quoted. The right hand is the place of honor or authority, and is given to the Messiah not angels. The position is described as seated in reference to the position of a sovereign on a throne. The angelic beings are never invited to be seated in the place of honor around God. In contrast angels are pictured as standing as God directs their service (Luke 1:19).

b. Jesus directs the angels to serve (14)

Jesus directs the angels to serve humans. Angels are not to have authority over mankind, nor are they equal with Jesus.

They are *ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation*? *Ministering spirits* is a reference service to God and to humanity. *Those who will inherit salvation* is a reference to humanity. Salvation is available to humans not to angels. While there is no biblical evidence that each person has a “guardian angel” assigned to them, the Bible does reveal several ways that angels serve humanity, including but not limited to: rejoicing in heaven over saved sinners (Luke 15:7), escorting souls to their eternal state (Luke 16:22), delivering God’s messages (Luke 1), protecting and delivering people (Acts 5,12).

Conclusion: There is no need for angels as mediators since Jesus is our Mediator (Hebrews 9:15, 1 Timothy 2:5). We are not to pray to angels nor worship angels. We should test reports regarding angels with what the Bible declares about them. Jesus is greater than angels in every way. So, we should choose to follow Jesus .

Study Guide Qs

Q1. Why do you think people are interested in angels?

Q2. Why might people be fascinated with angels but not interested in what the Bible says about them?

Q3. What might some of the dangers be with fascination of angels without a healthy biblical knowledge (angelology)?

Q4. Review the list of five ways that Jesus is better than angels. Pick one or two that resonate the most with you and explain why.

“Disciples Who Dig Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

1. Here is a brief overview of angelology: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Angelology.html>.

2. Start or finish reading through the Book of Hebrews.

Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?

2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?

Disciples who make disciples:

1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?

2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:

Engage, encourage and befriend someone fascinated with angels and seek to share the greatness of Jesus.

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Notes:

1. Preparation and participation: Group participants should read the teacher's notes contained in this study guide prior to your meeting and be prepared to discuss the content. Remember the purpose of preparation and participation is to accelerate growth as disciples who loves God supremely, loves neighbors like self, and make other disciples who do likewise. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.

2. Consider what about the passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?

If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.

3. The "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities. As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.

4. The "Love your neighbors" section encourages participants to love neighbors inside and outside the group better. As a leader, discuss this section frequently.

5. The "Disciples who make disciples" section provides a helpful idea, and encourages participants to be disciples who make disciples. Leaders should regularly encourage the group to review and discuss this section.