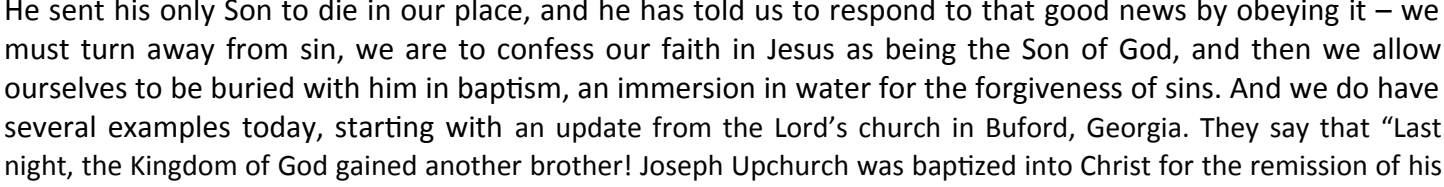


Jesus: Enthroned on High

Hebrews: Jesus is Better • PART 2 • Hebrews 1:3b-14

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It is good to be together this morning! If you are visiting with us today (either here in person or online), we are glad to have you with us this morning, and we would invite you to fill out an online visitor card by using the QR code on the front of the bulletin or by going to our website at fourlakescoc.org/visitor.

We are here today to worship God, and part of that is making sure we faithfully communicate his instructions. He sent his only Son to die in our place, and he has told us to respond to that good news by obeying it – we must turn away from sin, we are to confess our faith in Jesus as being the Son of God, and then we allow ourselves to be buried with him in baptism, an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins. And we do have several examples today, starting with an update from the Lord’s church in Buford, Georgia. They say that “Last night, the Kingdom of God gained another brother! Joseph Upchurch was baptized into Christ for the remission of his sins by his grandfather, Ron Horn. Join us in welcoming him into the Household of Faith, and let us rejoice with the angels of God!” And then they quote Luke 15:10, where Jesus says, ***“Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*** We are thankful for Joseph’s decision.

This next one comes to us from the church in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee. They say that “It was such a special moment yesterday to see Aubrey make this awesome decision! We’re so grateful for the cleansing power of our Savior’s blood!”

This next one comes to us from Marlon Rutherford who says that “Valentina from Belaya Tserkov, Ukraine was baptized into Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins in Warsaw. Praise the Lord!” God’s people in Warsaw are doing a great thing by hosting refugees out of Ukraine. Much good is being done.

And this last one comes to us from the Firm Foundation (August 13, 1935), and I’m sharing this one, because it’s something I’ve never seen before. The caption says, “Brother Horace W. Busby baptizing Willie D. and Myra A. Barnhill, daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Amos F. Barnhill, during the recent meeting at Austin, Texas. These fine girls are twins and their age is 13, and at their special request, Brother Busby administered the ordinance as a twin baptism.” I don’t know whether you can see this clearly in the picture, but he is baptizing both of these young women together, at the same time. I suppose they were born together the first time, and they are then born together again the second time. But we share all of these examples by way of encouragement, and if we can help with your obedience to the good news, please let us know.

This morning, at the request of one of our young adults, we are continuing in our study of Hebrews, an anonymous book that most likely started out not as a letter, but as a sermon that was then written down. And we learned last week that the big idea in Hebrews is that Jesus is Better. The author is writing (or preaching) to a group of Christians (like us) who may sometimes have a hard time listening to Jesus. As persecution increases and as time passes by, these people are getting a bit disillusioned. And in the same way, sometimes we also get distracted, sometimes we may be tempted to give up or go back, and we also need the reminder that Jesus is Better. In fact, the word we translate as *“better,”* or *“greater,”* or *“superior,”* is used thirteen times to describe Jesus in this book. Jesus is better! And my goal in this study is to have us work our way through the book of Hebrews in chunks. We won't be going cover-to-cover all at once, but we hope to break it up into sections, taking breaks along the way.

Well, last week, we started with the first three verses, where we learned that God in times past has spoken in many ways, but in these last days has spoken to us in his Son, and his son is truly better than all previous messengers. Jesus is a “Better Messenger.” And we learned from that first paragraph that when we get discouraged and tempted to give up, look to Jesus! He is the “Better Messenger.”

Well, today, we continue with the rest of Hebrews 1, and the author continues by emphasizing that Jesus is better, only this time, we focus in on Jesus being “Enthroned on High.” And as we look at the rest of Hebrews 1, we will find several reminders that Jesus is better than the ANGELS. I was somewhat tempted to use “Better Than the Angels” as a summary of today's study, but the more I studied, the more I came to understand that although they are mentioned several times, angels are not really the focus here. Jesus is BETTER than the angels. And yet, I did run across many lessons on ANGELS, based in Hebrews 1 (Five Things We Know About Angels From Hebrews 1, and so on). Angels, though, are not the main point. I'm reminded of preaching on Jesus turning the water into wine in John 2. As I researched that lesson several years ago, I looked in my folder on John 2 and found 15 articles on that passage, and 14 of those articles focused on why the various authors thought that the wine he made must not have contained any alcohol. I remember my brain yelling, “That's not the point of the passage!” The point of the passage is that Jesus is the Son of God, and that was his very first miracle, but everybody gets distracted by the wine. And by focusing on the wine, we miss the point. I think back to my time at Beaver Creek Bible Camp, where we had these highly educated astronomers from University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire come out to show our kids some stars. They have Wisconsin's third largest telescope in the observatory up there, and in one rotation they take small groups out onto the ball field at 10 at night to show us the stars. And one of these astronomers is getting really excited about some ring nebula gazillions of miles away, and as he's pointing with his laser, he's surrounded by 8-10 year old boys, and they are mesmerized by the laser! He pushes the button, and these little boys go nuts! “Dude! Where'd you get the laser? How much is it? Can you catch stuff on fire with it? Will it blind me if I look at it? Can I try it?” And finally, this PhD astronomer-type just says, “It's not about the laser!” Of course, I went home and ordered myself a laser on Amazon. But here's this amazing star, or nebula, or whatever, and we're focused on a \$10 laser. I'm just saying that something similar happens in Hebrews 1. Yes, the author mentions angels in this passage, and yes, angels are amazing creatures – in Bible times, when most people met an angel, they were terrified, they trembled, and sometimes they even fell down in worship – so, angels are amazing, but IT'S NOT ABOUT THE ANGELS! So I'm hoping we can focus on Jesus this morning. He is “enthroned on high.”

We will get to the text in just a moment, but before we do, I want us to keep an eye out for something. As we look at the rest of Hebrews 1, let's notice that when the author of Hebrews starts explaining who Jesus is, he doesn't just give us his opinions, he doesn't say, “This is who Jesus is to me,” but instead, he refers back to the word of God, he refers back to the Hebrew Bible. In the NASB, direct quotes from the Old Testament are usually indicated with all capital letters, and most of our Bibles have footnotes, with references back to the source. So I want us to notice that the rest of Hebrews 1 is almost completely all capital letters! He quotes

seven passages from several sources – from the Psalms, from Samuel, and from Deuteronomy. As we get to the main points, to make it a bit easier, I've tried to put the references in the right-hand margin (so we don't need to be digging through footnotes). But this preacher bases his sermon on the word of God! And I would also note that when he quotes these passages, he does not say "It is written," he does not say "David says," but as he quotes each passage, he attributes each quote not to men, but to God. So, whether it comes from the books of Law, or History, or Poetry, we are looking at the word of God this morning. And that right there is a lesson in itself: To learn about Jesus, we look to the word of God, we look to where we know God has spoken.

So, let's look at Hebrews 1:3-14, and we'll be picking up halfway through verse 3 (where we left off last week). And so that the text is actually readable, I've divided it up in to smaller chunks – Hebrews 1:3-14 (picking up in the middle of verse 3),

When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited 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 A FATHER TO HIM
AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME"?*

⁶ *And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says,*

"AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM."

⁷ *And of the angels He says,*

*"WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS,
AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE."*

⁸ *But of the Son He says,*

*"YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER,
AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM.*

⁹ *"YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS;
THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU
WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS."*

¹⁰ *And, "YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH,
AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS;*

¹¹ *THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN;
AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD LIKE A GARMENT,*

¹² *AND LIKE A MANTLE YOU WILL ROLL THEM UP;
LIKE A GARMENT THEY WILL ALSO BE CHANGED.*

*BUT YOU ARE THE SAME,
AND YOUR YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END."*

¹³ *But to which of the angels has He ever said,*

*"SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,
UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES
A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET"?*

¹⁴ *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?*

I. As we get into this, and as we are introduced to a new set of titles or descriptions, let's go back to the first little section (in verses 3-6), and let's start by noticing that JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD.

And the author introduces this description of Jesus by explaining (in verse 3) that he has *"made purification of sins."* And this is where it gets personal. Yes, in that opening paragraph, we had Jesus creating and holding the universe together, but now this is personal. This is what Jesus has done, not in eternity, but here on this earth, for us. This is a reference to the cross. Knowing that we would sin, he made purification possible. We are the reason for this. And then we are told that after he made purification of sins, Jesus *"sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."* Let's make sure we don't miss the importance of sitting down in this context. We think back to the tabernacle and the temple, and those structures had some amazing furniture – gold covered lamp stands, and basins, and altars, and tables, and bowls, and utensils, but those buildings never had any chairs! And the reason is: The priests could never sit down! Their work was never done. Day after day, year after year, they would continually offer sacrifices for the sins of the people, and their work was never done. Jesus, though, now sits at the right hand of God. He is "enthroned on high." His work of purification is done. This is referred to later in Hebrews 10:11-12, where the author says that *"Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God."* Jesus predicted this, by the way, in speaking to the Jewish ruling council in Matthew 26:64 – it's what sent them over the edge. The high priest said, *"I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God."* And Jesus said to him, *"You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN"* (quoting Psalm 110). At that point, the high priest tore his robes, accused Jesus of blasphemy, shut down the trial, started beating him, and turned him over to the Romans. They knew that to *"sit at the right hand of power"* was a place reserved for the Son of God.

And this is where we come to the first reference to angels – not as a main point, but as a "by the way." To prove how great Jesus is, the author quotes two more passages (from Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7), demonstrating that Jesus is, indeed, greater than the angels. Jesus is God's Son, something never said in such a personal way of the angels. And, in fact, to remove all doubt, the author then quotes another passage, referring to God apparently telling the angels to worship Jesus at his birth. So, not only is Jesus God's Son, and therefore greater than the angels, but the angels worship him (not the other way around). He has inherited a *"more excellent name than they."* Jesus is God's Son.

By the way, there are at least two major religious groups today who teach that Jesus IS an angel. The Mormons, I believe, teach that Jesus is the brother of another angel, Lucifer. And the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Jesus is the archangel Michael. Jesus, though, accepts worship; angels do not. Angels worship Him. He is the Son of God.

II. And this leads us to Jesus (described in verses 7-9) as a RIGHTEOUS KING.

Starting in verse 7, the author sets up a contrast. On one hand, God tells the angels to go do stuff – he makes his angels *"winds"* or *"spirits"* (as some translations have it). He makes his angels *"ministers"* or *"servants," "a flame of fire."* In other words, God orders his angels around like servants. On the other hand, though, to his Son, God himself addresses his Son as *"God."* God is calling his Son *"God"*! And his son is described as having an eternal *"throne,"* and as having a *"righteous scepter,"* and as having a *"kingdom,"* and as being *"anointed."* By the way, the word "CHRIST" and the word "MESSIAH" both mean "anointed." "Messiah" is from Hebrew, and "Christ" is the same word in Greek. So, whenever we sing about "Christ" this morning, we are singing about Jesus being God's Righteous King, "enthroned on high." God's Son, Jesus, then, is a King, and he is a righteous king. Here in this life, we have a saying, that "absolute power corrupts absolutely." King Jesus, though, is *"righteous,"* he has *"loved righteousness and hated lawlessness."* He's ruling right now, and his righteous throne will endure *"forever and ever"* (as prophesied in Daniel 2:44). Angels are merely servants; Jesus, though, is a King. Angels carry out orders; but as a King, Jesus gives orders. He is enthroned in heaven as God's righteous King.

III. We now come to verses 10-12 as we find that Jesus is also described as the ETERNAL LORD.

We see a contrast. On one hand, the earth and the heavens are temporary. Even science tells us that everything is winding down. The stuff we see around us will someday cease to exist. But on the other hand, Jesus will remain. The heavens will wear out like a garment. That's a picture we can understand! I remember the first time my wife made one of my shirts disappear. It was a shirt from a cardboard boat race down in Crystal Lake, Illinois. It fit so well, it was comfortable, but it wore out to the point where you could literally see through it, and one day it just disappeared. It might have just spontaneously ceased to exist, but my suspicion is still that she might have had something to do with it. Well, in perhaps a similar way, we find in this passage that Jesus will be the one to *"roll up"* the heavens *"like a mantle"* (like a jacket), and he will be the one to toss them aside and to swap them out for something new. His years, though, will never come to an end. He is the eternal *"Lord."* The word *"Lord"* in this passage is a word that refers to having power or authority. And throughout the New Testament, Jesus is often referred to as the *"Lord Jesus."* And here we are reminded that Jesus (as Lord and King) is eternal. That is security! Here in this life, rulers come and go. Jobs are temporary, our homes are temporary, relationships may come and go, but as Lord, Jesus is eternal.

IV. We now come to the last few verses (verses 13-14) as we find that Jesus is also described as a VICTORIOUS RULER.

And once again, we have a contrast with the angels. Jesus is better! To answer that first question: None! God has never told an angel to take a load off. God has never told an angel to have a seat by his right hand. God has never told an angel that he would make his enemies a footstool for his feet. But the implication is that God has said this to Jesus. Jesus is a victorious ruler. Angels, though, are servants, *"ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation."* That's us, by the way! Angels are sent out to serve us. How? I don't know. We aren't told the details, so it must not matter. But angels are sent out by God to serve his people.

The word *"service"* in this passage goes back to the same word we would recognize today as *"deacon."* As I remember it, the history of the word is a bit vague, but many trace the word back to something of a compound word meaning "around the table," and it's the idea of a servant kicking up dust by running around the table serving those who are eating the meal. One of the most socially awkward meals I've ever had was at some fancy restaurant downtown Chicago. I was in high school and representing all of the 4-H photography people from Illinois that year, so we had one 4-H photographer from each state, and that meal was sponsored by the Eastman Kodak Corporation. Kodak was a company that made film, something we used in the olden days to take pictures. But Kodak had their corporate people there (from their headquarters in Rochester, New York), and I remember stepping up to a plate completely surrounded by forks, and knives, and spoons, and cups, and napkins – that right there was a bit overwhelming, but when I sat down, there was a server apparently assigned to me, with the white cloth over his arm, waiting to do whatever needed to be done. Take a sip of water, and his arm would reach around with a pitcher – all night long! That's what deacons do, they kick up dust around the table. That's what those seven men in Acts 6 were doing – they were chosen by the congregation and recognized by the apostles to serve tables. And that's what angels do, they serve. And to focus on the angels in this passage would be to focus on the laser. Serving is good, Jesus came to serve, but in this passage, Jesus is ruling over his enemies, and angels are serving at the Lord's direction.

Conclusion:

This morning, we have looked at Jesus "enthroned on high" – Son of God, Righteous King, Eternal Lord, and Victorious Ruler. In practical terms, we've learned, first of all, that when we're unsure or wobbling in our faith, we go back to the book. Like the author of Hebrews, we go back to Scripture. When the world presses in, when we're tempted to turn back, we open the Word. As we learned last week: God has spoken, and Jesus is the better Messenger.

But there's a second very practical result of our study this morning, and that is Jesus (as we have studied him today) absolutely deserves everything we have to offer – our love, our praise, our lives, everything. He is the Son of God, he

is God's Anointed and Righteous King, he is the Eternal Lord, and he is the one and only Victorious Ruler who will (in the end) put his foot on the neck of every enemy (his enemies will be his footstool). He is more than an angel, he is far more than any man. He is the Son of God. The question is: Do we recognize this? Are we allowing him to rule over us? Today, we have the awesome privilege of falling at his feet in worship, praising him for who he really is. Jesus is better!

As the prophet Isaiah says in Isaiah 55:6-7, ***"Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."*** ***"He who overcomes,"*** Jesus says, ***"I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne"*** (Revelation 3:21).

Josh has chosen some songs to emphasize what we've learned from Hebrews this morning, but as we prepare our minds for the Lord's Supper, let's go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

You are the great and awesome God, Creator of heaven and earth. Thank you, Father, for Jesus, your Son. He is truly our Lord and King, the great King above all other kings. Thank you for revealing Jesus to us in your word.

We come to you through Jesus, our Savior and Lord. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com