

## **The Supremacy of Christ-Part 2**

### **Angels 101**

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As I was reading through this passage, I was thinking about posing a question to you. Maybe I can throw this out for dinner tonight. Would you rather come over to my house and have a nicely cooked piece of filet mignon, maybe medium rare, maybe a baked potato, some butter, a little sour cream maybe? Oh, I like these food illustrations. Would you like to have that? Or I could offer you a large, congealed, aged, room-temperature duck egg. Which would you choose? It's not a trick question. What do you think? You go for the filet? Okay. Well, not in China. You're in China. The aged duck egg is like the delicacy. And, I mean, they would pass on your steak so fast to get at that room-temperature duck egg.

Or how about if I want a little late-night snack, you know, just before you leave, we pull out either a nice warm plate of chocolate chip cookies with a pitcher of ice-cold milk. Oh, let's just think of that for a minute. Would you rather have that or maybe a little piece of fried goat meat? Your choice. What would you prefer? Yeah, unless of course you're in a village maybe somewhere in Egypt where, uh, I mean, you know, get a piece of goat meat, that'd be great. Pass the goat meat.

Or how about this? What would you rather have in your garage, maybe that pearl blue metallic Porsche Carrera? Ah. Those low-profile tires. Do you want that in your garage, or maybe just a cud-chewing cow? Which would you prefer? You want the Porsche, right? Unless, of course, you're maybe in India where, you know, I've got no real interest in your blue Porsche, but that sacred cow. Why don't you send one of those over?

See, the problem is that your preference as to what you think is better has everything to do with your background and your culture. And that is the problem we run into as we try to study the first two chapters of the book of Hebrews as 21st-century American Christians. We look at this text and we see ourselves hit with the question whether we think Jesus of Nazareth is better or angels. And I'm thinking for most of us, that's a no-brainer, right? Which one's better, Jesus or angels? Well, we think, oh, you know, of course, if I asked you that question in the lobby, you'd say, oh, well, Jesus is better. I vote for Jesus. And we'd say, well, that's the right answer, see?

And you probably have never been tempted to value or choose angels over Jesus. Not a problem for you. Never a temptation. Let's just face it, you haven't really thought about angels for the last 30 days. Jesus, yeah, he's been the focus of our song, so there's no problem there. And yet, if you were a first-century Jewish person raised in Saturday after Saturday of Sabbath school, and you had studied and understood the high and lofty position of angels in their mediatorial role, you would say, you're telling me a carpenter's son from Nazareth is going to outrank that? You'd need some convincing. As a matter of fact, you might need two chapters of convincing. That is exactly what we run into in the book of Hebrews.

Now, it's difficult to preach because I'm here trying to follow the text and the flow and the argument and say, well, here's what this is all about. Jesus is better than angels. And you go, oh, okay. I knew that. But here's the problem. We may not need the point of the argument, but the components of the argument, the things that the writer of Hebrews says for two chapters, those are magnificent. Matter of fact, those points can change your lives. That is a series of messages that we all desperately need.

So this morning, what I thought I would do is take the argument itself and extract it from the components of the argument that are going to take us the rest of the summer and probably half of the fall to work our way through, and say, now wait a minute, this was an issue for them. And our first challenge before we get into all these weeks of edifying sermons about who Christ is and where he ought to be in our lives, let us at least try to appreciate the comparison. And so for us, that's not going to mean that I try and say, hey, hey, those angels, don't think quite so highly of those angels as you should. Christ is higher. I need to say, wait a minute, these angels that you've never even really thought of for the last year, can we understand a little bit about why that might be a temptation for a first-century Jew who's reading the same Old Testament that you are?

Maybe it's time for us to put a little spotlight for one week at least on who these angelic beings are all about. So this morning, let's just do a little background here and just try to, number one on your outline, let's jot it down, let us just try to understand the comparison. Because for them, it was a big deal. For us, it's no big deal. But it should be. I think it should be a bigger deal than it is. I think we should start to say, well, who are these angels? What are they all about? And why is being better than an angel a big deal at all? Good question. Let's try and sort through it.

This book in the first two chapters is broken down into several arguments. The components of the arguments are important. Matter of fact, if you have your Hebrew text open, just look at the first chapter after the introductory statement in verse number 4, saying that he became as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. He then goes on to describe it. And he talks about sonship of this Jesus from Nazareth compared to the servant nature of these angels. And he starts talking about the fact that these angels don't quite have the intimacy, relationship, and access to God that the Son has. The Son is far superior.

Now again, what you need to understand is that from their vantage point, and maybe perhaps from ours, we need to recognize, put this down as like a letter A or first bullet, you and I need to at least learn to appreciate that angels have an incredible access to God.

# **1. Understand the comparison**

## **Angels have incredible access to God**

Because we take for granted things that aren't even really true. We take for granted the fact that you have full access to God. But in reality, man, Paul said it, we see through a glass dimly. Or Paul wrote to Timothy and said he dwells in unapproachable light. Key phrase: unapproachable. And in Old Testament Jewish worship, you get the picture loud and clear. Because even just to get into Jerusalem, you got to go through the gates of Jerusalem, you got to get into the city of Jerusalem, then you got to get up to the Temple Mount, and then you got the outer court, you got the court of the Gentiles, you got the court of the women, you got the court of the men, then you got the place where the priests can go, and then you got the outer room, and then you got the inner room, then you got the Holy of Holies. And in the Holy of Holies, there's a box. And on the box, it's supposed to be the manifestation of the presence of the Almighty God. But the bottom line is there's lots of fences between you and that box.

And here's the news flash. You ain't getting in. You're not getting in. As a matter of fact, it's just a place where the high priest once a year goes in with his knees knocking, just trying to represent us



on Yom Kippur once a year. But all of us, basically, God is unapproachable. You're not going to have a meeting with God.

I mean, in a small way, we can figure it like this. If Bush has got his feet up watching some baseball game this afternoon at his big compound in Texas, if I said, why don't you get Bush on the line? So you get your cell phone out. You try to talk to Bush at his ranch in Texas today. News flash. What's going to happen? Nothing, right? You're not getting through.

See, but if I said, I got, uh, I got, uh, I got, uh, Andy Card, chief of staff, or I've got, uh, Donald Rumsfeld here, the security guy, Department of Defense, they want to get through to Bush. Do you think they're going to get through to Bush this afternoon? Oh yeah. I mean, they got a cell phone number, right? They're going to be able to get through and interrupt the game.

Now, the point that he's making is God's got a Son. And let's just acknowledge it. Let's say Jenna Bush wants to kind of break in on his afternoon of baseball. Think she can get in? Oh yeah. I think she can get in and maybe have greater access to George Bush this afternoon than even Andy Card can have. Do you think maybe she can? Oh, you bet. Why? Relationship. She's the president's daughter.

Now, what we do is we sit back, people who absolutely have no chance of having any forum with the president this afternoon, and we sit back and we're not impressed anymore with Donald Rumsfeld's access. We're not impressed with that anymore. But here's the bottom line. You should be. And even us, our relationship is a long-distance relationship with God. You haven't had any face-to-face conversations with him. You've had some long-distance emails. We pray to him. And we come before him in Christ. And I know we're way more intimate with God now than we were as non-Christians. I get it. I know it. But you're not having face-to-face conversations with God.

But here's the deal. Angels are. Angels are. Right now, angels are. Angels are in our realm, in this world. They're active now, and they're also able to go right to the presence of God. Matter of fact, Job chapter 1 is a good little reference to jot down maybe this afternoon and look at it. They are having a board meeting. That's what's happening. It says, and then the angels come and they present themselves before God. And the way it's put there, it's like this is a regular event. They're sitting around the big conference table and all the angels get to have a little forum with God. Hey, that's more than you get, right? And you're not impressed with that? You ought to be.

As a matter of fact, Jesus said you ought to be. Turn in your Bibles, if you would, to Matthew chapter 18. Keep your finger in Hebrews chapter 1. We'll get back to the argument as to why the Son has got more access than angels. I mean, really, you'll do that in weeks to come. But we'll get back to the rest of this argument. Right now, at least recognize this. Jesus wants us to recognize what a big deal it is that angels have access.

Matthew chapter 18, he's talking about Christians. One of his endearing terms for Christians is calling them children or little ones, right? You're familiar with that. And he talks about you don't want to cause the little ones, the Christians, to sin. He's even taken a kid there and, as a living example, showed them, here, the little kids. This is what it's like. And if you're going to be converted and become a Christian, you've got to be like a little kid. You've got to have that implicit trust. And then he says, don't cause them to sin.

Then look down at verse number 10. He says, don't even in any way be condescending to these little ones, to these followers of Jesus. Don't do it. And here's his logic. Underscore it. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. And you don't realize what a big deal that is. You gotta recognize that when you're gonna deal with a follower of Jesus, their angels who get to zip on out to the boardroom and they get into the oval office of heaven, you need to recognize that you don't wanna be condescending toward one of the little ones because their angels are cabinet members and have regular access with the face of the majestic, unapproachable God. They're having coffee with him. So don't you dare look down on those Christians.

And Jesus says you've got to know it because you don't want to offend these angels, and you've got to recognize what a big deal that is. Now the first-century Sabbath school graduate is going to say, I know that. Angels, man. I know angels are here among us, but they're also in the presence of God. That's something I can't do. And wow, those are highly respected people. Why? Because angels have access, incredible access to God. And we're sitting here trying to deal with God long distance.

## **Angels have incredible authority**

Back to Hebrews chapter 1. Hebrews chapter 1, he goes on to explain, verses 8, even dipping into the second chapter, he starts talking about the fact that the Son outranks in terms of authority. He outranks the angels. Now again, we're going, okay, whatever. I know that. It's a no-brainer for us, not a no-brainer for them. Why? Because they had a better and more biblical view of angels than you do. And they recognized this, that there is an incredible authority vested in angels. Jot that down, second thing. The angels have incredible authority. Incredible authority.

Now, you don't have a lot of authority. They have a ton of authority. And in Scripture, the argument's made here that the Son's got even more than angels. And that's a big, big, big deal. We, on the other hand, in relative comparison to the angels, man, what do we got? We got a tiny little yard in South Orange County, right? That's my land right there. I'm in charge of that. I can do whatever I want with that grass.

Angels? Daniel chapter 10, that'd be a good one to look at. Daniel chapter 10. Angels are talking about their assignments of authority on the planet Earth like it ain't no big deal. And it is a big deal because they're used to the power and authority they've been granted and delegated by God. And it pales by comparison to any other being that we know of until, of course, the Son comes along and says, you know what? Everybody's going to be subject to the Son.

Daniel chapter 10. I said that. Did you turn there? Take a look at this text. Daniel chapter 10. We'll let you catch up if you were bashful. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel. Book of Daniel.

Daniel's an exilic prophet. That means he's doing his ministry during the exile when the tribes of Israel, the southern tribes, get taken away to Babylon. And so he's there. He's recognizing what got them there. And he begins to pray with repentance and contrition about the nation. And he intercedes for the nation. And he starts to pray. And then God starts to answer.

Daniel chapter 10, look at verse number 4. It says, On the twenty-fourth day of the first month as I was standing, this is Daniel talking, on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, he says, verse 5, I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen with a belt of finest gold around his waist. His body was like chrysolite. His face was like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his



arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice was like the sound of a multitude. Amazing. Who's this guy? He's a guy in authority. This is his outfit. He's filled with authority from God. He's an authorized agent of God.

As a matter of fact, drop down to verse 12. Daniel, of course, is afraid of all this, and the angel has to say, don't be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day, or I should say, once the first day, right, his sound-of-multitude voice is coming out, that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But, now notice this, this is just kind of, I'm just telling you where I've been the last few days. The prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me 21 days. You've been doing what? I've been fighting with the prince of the kingdom of Persia. Really? Yeah, and then Michael, though, he came down, and you know him, he's one of the chief princes of the planet. He came down to help me because I was detained there with the king of Persia. Now I've come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Drop down to verse 20. So then he said, he said, do you know why I've come to you? Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia. You know, fight somewhere with who? The prince of Persia. And then I'll go and, oh yeah, the prince of Greece will come. Who? The prince of Greece. But first I'll tell you what's written in the Book of Truth. No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince.

Who are these people, right? You got angels there with these voices and all this stuff and eyes like flames and torches and burnished bronze, and they're out there fighting with what, human princes? No, no, no. These are the angels of the countries.

Now I know you think that we have some, you know, Republican Party and some Republican president, and we got the Supreme Court and all that's important. You know what? That's such small beings, because in reality God is dispatching all over the planet and giving authority to angelic beings. See? Think about that. And he's saying, okay, let's see. You go run the United States for a while. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Go on, go on. Let me know how it goes.

Wow, you're kidding me. Yeah. No, that's how it works. Matter of fact, the whole kingdom of Persia was run by one angel. What? And what are we ruling over right now? Not much, right? Twenty-two square feet of backyard in South County. Whatever. Whatever our little space is. I own two cars, you know. And what are they overseeing? Tons of stuff. Their opinion in the boardroom of heaven has everything to do with how things go in those countries. And they're overseeing it all. Good ones and bad ones. More on that later.

What's the point? Hugely authorized. As a matter of fact, the Old Testament Sabbath school graduate would sit back and say, yeah, I know all about the angels. The angels, man, they're running this place. Really? Yeah. Governors, mayors, kings, princes. Wow. Never thought of that. Well, that's what's happening.

See, and so when you came on the scene and said, I know someone who's in charge of everything, you're going, oh no, wait a minute. Angels are in charge of everything. They're the mediatorial leaders of the world. They run the place in the stead of God. They have the delegated authority of the Almighty God. And people are going, oh no, wait a minute. Oh, there's this carpenter from Nazareth, see, and he's really the one in charge of the world. What? You got to prove that to me. At least two chapters, you got to prove that to me. And so the writer of Hebrews goes out to prove it.

But what we need to stand back and say is, wow, those angels, they have incredible authority. And what we're focused on as 21st-century evangelical Christians is Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords. And you know what? We should totally be impressed with that. We should. Matter of fact, we should understand it better, and we will in this series. But you do recognize, don't you, that as we focus on the commandant of the Marine Corps, we're all a bunch of Marines, right? We look at the ultimate authority in the Marine Corps. We should at least every now and then recognize, you know, the major general has a lot of authority too, you know. And we're going, oh, I don't even know, whatever, major general, whatever. King of kings and Lord of lords. Well, don't just so quickly sweep those guys aside. Because you better, by the way, listen to the major general, right, if he's authorized.

Matter of fact, look in chapter 2 of Hebrews where he says that don't you realize that you have to listen to the authorized leadership? And if the angels are going to speak on behalf of God, and so they did in the old covenant by giving the law of God to the people, the mediators of the law, look at verse number 2 of Hebrews 2. Don't you know that if the message spoken by angels was binding and every violation of what they said and every disobedience to what they commanded, it received a just punishment, then you better listen to the Son. Well, that's after he's already established the Son is more authoritative. But the point is, those angels were authoritative too.

Yeah, they had an incredible authority. And some of us need to say, wow, okay, I recognize why this argument's important, because the Bible teaches that angels have incredible authority.

## **Angels have incredible power**

And this passage, by the way, brings up another point, that there is a reaction. Some kind of binding word needs some kind of enforcement. And the enforcement doesn't come just by wearing a badge. It comes by carrying a gun, right? Oh, you can say you're in charge, you're authorized, but you know what? You can't enforce it unless you have power. And that's where the passage goes on to talk about power.

As a matter of fact, he says in the next section here, beginning in verse number 5, if you still have Hebrews open, he says, it's not to angels that he subjected the world to come. And we all go, oh yeah, I know that. No, no, no, wait a minute. They didn't know that. As a matter of fact, the world, if the authorized leaders, spiritual leaders of the world are angels, then they're the ones that are also gonna mediate and adjudicate the things that they, they're going to be the ones with the power. They're gonna run the armies of heaven, the hosts of heaven.

Oh, I know they have the commandant, but the generals and the sergeant majors, they've got authority too, man. And when they speak, people jump. And so we realize that in the next section, he goes on to talk about the power of the Son and why that's more powerful than even these authoritative and powerful angels. But we need to step back and say, wow, well, I guess we should admit in Scripture, thirdly, third bullet point, angels have incredible power, incredible power. As a matter of fact, if they are called to do something to enforce God's rules, they can do it without even breaking a sweat. Without even breaking a sweat.

Jot this passage down. How about 2 Kings chapter 19? They're having this battle with the Assyrians. And so here's God's people fighting the Assyrians. In the text, it says this, that an angel, check this out, went out and put to death 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp in one night. And the



next morning they all woke up and they looked around and there was 185,000 men dead in the Assyrian camp. One angel, the text says, did that.

Now, how many people can you take on at once? How many? Throw in Jackie Chan. He's going to be your co-fighter, okay? How many? I don't know. Depends. How strong are they? How big are they? Here is one angel doing this to 185,000. Here's the point. They could snuff your life out in a second. They could snuff your life out. There are angels, the Bible teaches, that are present with us here this morning, that if they were allowed, could take their incredible power and go, dead. What's next? Oh, no, break a sweat? No problem. Oh, kill them all? God, you want to kill, that's it. Hard for them? Not hard.

Have you ever even thought of that? That the people that have the power to kill you, and I use the word people, and we'll look at this in a minute, they are people, see? They have intellect, emotion, and will. They are thinking people with names and jobs and positions of authority. They could right now snuff you out completely. Completely. That's how powerful they are, and we don't even think about it. We think, oh, Jesus, he's the powerful one. He is the powerful one, and he has more power than angels, but that argument doesn't even make sense unless you recognize angels have a lot of power. Incredible power. Incredible power to rule and to enforce.

They have incredible power, partly because they have incredible wisdom. Here's a passage for you to jot down. 2 Samuel chapter 14. Their power is partly derived because they totally know what's going on. And they know what's going on partly because they've been around so long. Who's the wisest guy in the whole Lucas thing? The little green wrinkly guy. Wise I am. There he is. Yoda. Why is he supposed to be so wise? Because he's so old. Long time around I've been, you know, or whatever he says.

Now, here's the thing. Angels have been around before the creation of the world. I'll prove that to you in a minute. And here they are. Do you think they've ever seen the problems or challenges you're facing in your life right now? Oh, I've seen that 860 million times now. Yeah, look at what he's dealing with. Look at the temptation he's facing. Oh, I've seen that. Yeah, I remember once about 4,000 years ago, I was dealing with a guy. They've been around a long time. They know the problems. They have incredible power because they know so much.

That passage talks about the fact that when they figured out the ruse that was going on there about Joab, they said, wow, you've got incredible wisdom, almost like an angel of God. The point is, of course, we know angels know more than you'll ever know. So look at that list. You got access to God? Long distance, man. Who's got access to God? Who can have a face-to-face with him this afternoon? The cabinet members, the angels. Oh, what about authority? What are you ruling over? I don't know. One thirty-second of an acre. Okay, they're ruling entire pieces of the globe. Oh, what about power? How much power do you have? I mean, you're going to the gym and working out. What's it looking like? You don't have a lot of power. What can they do? They could snuff out the entire nation this afternoon, one of them, if they just had half a reason to. Incredible power. Knowledge? They know way more than you'll ever know on this earth till you have the mind of Christ. They got you totally outdone.

And the first-century Sabbath school graduates sat back and said, I know that, man. Angels, incredible. As a matter of fact, when it comes to some entity, some person that has interaction with God and us, I'm telling you, there ain't nothing better than angels. And the writer of Hebrews says, oh, there is, though. More on that next week.

Now, we're just trying to get a sense of it here. But it doesn't fill in all the gaps, because there's a lot of knowledge about angels assumed. So what I thought I would do, many excurses here, point number two. I know it's terrible homiletics. Don't tell your homiletics professor. But here, look at the second section of your outline, and let's try and do something that we shouldn't do, and we don't have time to do, but let's try and do it, okay? Let's try and do a quick just overall view of the parts that we may be missing, particularly because we don't think about angels and we don't let the Bible define what angels are. We kind of let the Hallmark calendars define what angels are about. So we've got a gap here we've got to fix. We've got to dispel a few myths.

## **2. Appreciate God's impressive messengers**

So before we go on to the punchline of this whole passage, let's just at least say, wow, what is it that we need to know about? Let's try and understand and appreciate these incredible messengers of God. Number two on your outline, let's head it that way. Number two, appreciate God's impressive messengers. Let's try and do that by dispelling a few myths.

### **Angels aren't dead people**

Here's what you need to understand. Let's dispel a few myths. Number one, angels aren't dead people. Let's just get that clear, okay? Angels aren't dead people. They're not disembodied humans. Because I know, you know, all the bad funeral theology notwithstanding, we've got to recognize, and all the corny movie scripts, dead people are not angels. It's not like, oh, they earned their wings. You know, you hear, no, they didn't earn their wings. You're not creating angels at funerals.

Angels are a completely separate class, and angels are made in the image of God. But we're so materially bound, we think image means something that we can see or shape. It doesn't. Image of God means that we can respond with the same kinds of characteristics of God, and that is that we have the basic components of personhood. And that means that we can think. We have an intellect. We are sentient. We feel. We have emotions. And we also have a volition. We have a will. Intellect, emotion, and will. Components of personality.

And when God created angels, he created a whole class of people just like himself. They reflected his character. They are people, intellect, emotion, and will. And then he gets along to saying, well, I'm going to create some more people that now are going to be put into this new weird thing called material stuff. I'm going to create people who are spirit, intellect, emotion, and will, have the elements of personality, and we're going to stick them in a material world.

Here's the reference to jot down. Job 38:4-7. This proves they're not disembodied people because God here, this scene in Job 38, he's creating the world, and then he says, and you know who was standing by kind of cheering me on? All the angels. All the angels applauded when we made the world and laid the foundation of this planet and we spun it out there in space. They all go, oh, very good, bravo. They'd never seen anything like that because they are people without bodies.

Now, they're not humans. They're angelic, but they are people created before people who are in bodies were created, but they're not human. Created in God's image. Whole separate class. They are the original spirit people, see, and created before any people were created here on earth, people

who are destined and designed to fit in material bodies. I know that's a bit much for Sunday morning, but let's say it and move on.

## **Angels are not fat and cute**

Two, dispel another myth. Ready? Angels are not fat and cute. Jot that down. They're not fat and cute. Hallmark calendars, right? Notwithstanding, they are not fat and cute.

As a matter of fact, jot these references down. How about this? Revelation chapter 4, which corresponds, by the way, to Ezekiel chapter 1. One time I was given an assignment in a class I was taking to draw out what I saw there in the vision of Revelation chapter 4. And I also used Ezekiel chapter 1 because the same beings, angelic beings, are being described. And guess what? You wouldn't want a calendar with 12 pictures of those things on it because they're bizarre. They're weird. They're weird, you know, things hanging out. It's just awful. You don't want a picture of it. I have one in my file that I drew, by the way, and you don't want to see that one either. It's too weird. It's bizarre.

And as a matter of fact, when they show up in a way that God says, well, I'm going to make this angel manifest itself here to Daniel in Daniel chapter 10, and he's going to show up in kind of a human form, here comes this guy who just blows Daniel away. Daniel doesn't go, oh, how cute, an angel. Oh, I always wanted to see an angel. It's good to have you. You know, have a seat here, tubby. You know, let's just play me a song on your harp. What does he do? You've read the text. What does he do in Daniel chapter 10? He falls on the ground. His knees are knocking. And when the angel actually came over there in this manifestation and touched him, he said he trembled. He couldn't speak. Totally without energy, he said.

Now, could an angel manifest himself in a fat, cute way? I suppose. But it wouldn't reflect their power, their access to God, or their authority, because they're powerful beings who sit in the boardroom of heaven. And I don't think they have any need to show up in some contradictory form because these are powerful beings. And their imagery in symbolic representation in the visions that God gives these prophets in the Bible, he doesn't give them pictures of cute people floating around, these cute angels. They're not cute and fat. Daniel chapter 10, Ezekiel chapter 1, Revelation chapter 4. A lot of passages there that might help.

## **They don't have wings**

How about this one? This one's going to throw you, and you're going to argue with me on the patio afterwards, but that's why we're going to have Q&A on Thursday nights. But jot this one down. Are you ready? They don't have wings. Okay, jot that down. They don't have wings. They don't have wings. Okay, they don't have wings.

Oh wait a minute, I know exactly in the Bible where it says they have wings. Okay, you know in the Bible, the Bible talks about God having eyes, God having hands, God having wings. Did you know that? All those places in the Bible talk about that because they're trying to express something to us that we will connect with and understand, but it's not that they're trying to say they inherently have those things, because to have those things, you'd have to be material. And God, John 4, is not material. He's spirit.

And here's the thing. If you've got Hebrews open, look at verse number 14 of chapter 1. It says they are ministering, what? Spirits. And that means they don't have wings. Now, you know, Exodus 25, I know, it says right there, they're going to make this class of angels, two of them, on the top of the box of the promise, the Ark of the Covenant, and they're going to be depicted with wings touching. Yeah, I understand that. And in that representation of angels, they have two wings. And in Ezekiel chapter 1, some angels there have four wings. Yeah, and four faces. It's bizarre. And then in chapter 6 of Isaiah, they have six wings. How many wings do they have? I don't know. That's not the point, though. The point is these depictions and images and visions of angels are trying to communicate something to us about what they are and what they do.

And they're swift, the Bible says, to carry out God's will. And in the old, you know, ancient world, the swiftest thing to get from point A to point B, man, it's the birds, it's the eagles, it's the things that fly around. And so they're depicted for people to understand their swift ability and readiness to serve God by having wings. Do they have wings? They don't have wings. And if they had wings, they wouldn't have eyes to see their wings, see? They don't have eyes. They don't have ears.

Now, God allows them to interface with humans throughout biblical history, and he allows them to manifest themselves in material ways, and that's bizarre because it's always different, in material ways so that people can actually have some interface with them here on earth. In other words, you'll have angels show up with Lot in the book of Genesis and actually move sound waves with vocal cords. But they don't have sound waves with vocal cords. They're temporarily on loan. God makes them there for them to interface with human beings.

And they don't have, you know, I know they don't have vocal cords because they have no need for them, because when they communicate with each other, they don't have three bones in the inner ear of their ear canal to move little bones to send electrical pulses to a brain because they're not that. They're not material. They're spirit. And spirit doesn't have those things.

And if you don't believe that, jot this reference down. It's worth looking at because it's so important to define what spirit is. Let's turn there. Let's turn to the book of Luke. Luke chapter 24. Luke 24. This you should look at. We're going to look at verses 36 through 40 if you're taking notes. Luke 24, verses 36 through 40.

These depictions in the Bible, occasionally they have wings. Occasionally they show up and speak with a mouth and a tongue and teeth and a palate in the roof of their mouth. But they, in their form as they exist now in our presence and in the presence of God, are without all that because we were the ones created to exist in material reality. They weren't.

Luke chapter 24, verses 36 and following. This is when Jesus has been resurrected, and of course all the disciples saw him get murdered on a cross, and so they're sitting around talking about this rumor about Jesus being raised from the dead. And it says in verse 36, while they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said shalom. Peace be with you. And they were going, freak out, what? You're dead. They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.

Do you see ghost in your NIV there? You should have a marginal note or something, or at least write this. It's the word *pneuma*, or spirit. They thought they were seeing a spirit. Same word used in Hebrews chapter 1, verse 14. Same word used in John chapter 4 to describe God. Spirit. They thought they were seeing a spirit, which is a bizarre manifestation of something that's not corporal, that's not material.

And he said to them, why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself. Touch me and see. A spirit, a *pneuma*, a ghost, as the NIV poorly translates it, does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have. And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. Look, see here, I'm not a spirit. If I were a spirit, I wouldn't have this stuff, because spirit doesn't have this stuff.

See, angels right now that exist in our presence, and they are localized to locales, the Bible says, they're not omnipresent. Spirit doesn't mean that you're omnipresent. They have focused presence. Their focused presence, if it's here, is not in a material way. That's why the medieval church talking about how many angels can you get to dance on the head of a needle, have you heard that before, they had entire church councils to try and figure these things out. And the point is, infinite numbers. Why? Because they don't take up space, see. And the church councils, by the way, pretty consistently throughout church history always came back to that. They don't have corporal material bodies. The evidence in Scripture says they don't. They appear that way sometimes, and sometimes they're given those temporarily, but they don't have wings. They're depicted with wings, but they don't have any.

## They don't die

Fourth bullet point, Luke chapter 20, verse 36. Another thing I sometimes hear, we need to clarify, number four, they don't die. Angels don't die. And in that sense, they have existed from the time of Job 38, which was prior to the creation of a material world, prior to Genesis chapter 1. They existed as a direct creation of God. Psalm 148 says, a direct creation of God. God spoke and they were created. And they have been living ever since. They don't die.

In the text there, Luke chapter 20, verse 36, talking about our resurrected state, Jesus says we're going to be like the angels in that we can no longer die. See, that's the connection. Oh, you know, the angels don't die. And just like that, when you're resurrected, you won't die. You will exist on.

Does that make them eternal? What do you need to be eternal? You need both bookends taken off the shelf, right? Eternal means you existed from all time. I was, I am, I will be. Well, they're not eternal because they had a starting point. And we have a starting point too. They were created in time. We were created in time. God sits outside of time. He's eternal. But they don't die. They were created, but they do not die.

## They're not all the same

Fifth point, they're not all the same. I know one of the characterizations of angels is you just have all these angels that just all look exactly the same. They're all cloned. They all, whatever they are, they're just like robots. Angel one is just like angel two and angel three. They're not.

As a matter of fact, in Scripture, here's some passages for you. They're ranked and they're named. How about Isaiah chapter 6? We talk about a whole class of seraphim. Seraphim, wherever you see an *im* on an English transliteration of a Hebrew word, it's a plural, seraphs. Sometimes the translations say. But a seraphim is a class of angels. What are they? I don't know, but they're not cherubim because there's another class of people called the cherubim, the cherubs. Cherubs aren't

seraphim and seraphim aren't cherubs. And I don't know how they get their jobs and I don't know if they can change their jobs, but they have different jobs.

And then there's the four living creatures and then there's all these other things. And then even in passages like Ephesians 6:12, he talks about other rankings of angels. And they have names. Gabriel had a name, right? Luke 1:26. Michael has a name, Daniel chapter 10. These are not nameless robots, spirit robots. This is not a software program that God wrote. These are entities that have personalities and names. They get home at the end of the day, wherever that is, because it's not material, and they talk to each other, how was your day, Jim? Right? How did work go? They have jobs, they have names, they have assignments, they have delegated authority, they have power. Some are doing this and others are doing that. Don't think of them as some non-personalities. I don't know if there's any name Jim or not, but they have names. Did I say Jim? Yeah.

## **They're not all good**

Sixth point, they're not all good. I hope you know that. They're not all good. As a matter of fact, 2 Peter 2:4 says angels can sin, and when they do, they get tossed out of heaven. They get cast away, just like our sin does to us. It separates us from God.

Demons are not different than angels. They're just angels that have sinned. Matthew chapter 25, verse 41. Matthew 25:41 talks about the devil and his angels. They're angels. Different word for them. Demons, if you want to call them that. They're not all good. They're the same class of people in that they're created to not exist in a material world. They have intellect, emotion, and will, but they're not all good.

There's two parts. As a matter of fact, the Bible calls them elect angels, 1 Timothy 4, and evil angels or sinful angels or unclean spirits. We have these holy angels and we have these sinful angels. Satan himself is an angel, right? Satan is an angel. That's what we learn about Satan.

As a matter of fact, in the imagery of the prophecy against the king of Tyre, we start to see it creep outside of that historical circumstance, and we start reading about this bizarre discussion of how this angel fell from heaven. And that's in Ezekiel 28, by the way, and Isaiah 14, if you're taking notes. Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 both talk about it. And actually Revelation chapter 12, verse 4, talks about something similar to that. Maybe the same thing. It's certainly talking about Satan sweeping away a third of the stars of heaven and all that. It's apocalyptic and it's hidden behind the imagery. But the bottom line is Satan was an angel, is an angel. He's an angelic being. He's just the most powerful one. When you talk about ranking, he's at the top of the pyramid of sinful angels.

## **None of them are equal to God**

As we talk about a powerful angel named Satan, you need to know this. The seventh point I want you to get today is none of them are equal to God. No angels are equal to God. And I know that sometimes those commercials with the little demon on the shoulder and then there's a little angel on the shoulder and, you know, do the bad thing. No, do the right thing. And we, okay, it's kind of this battle between good and evil. That's called dualism when it comes to the ultimate authorities.

If we start thinking there's God and all of his good angels, and then there's Satan and all of his bad angels, and these are two equal forces just kind of fighting it out, and the good news is God's going

to win, see? If we think that, we don't understand it. That's called dualism. We don't believe in that. We believe that the Bible teaches very clearly there are simply two categories of entities in the universe. Two categories. And the categories aren't good and evil. The categories are Creator and created. That's all you got.

You got a Creator, triune God. 1 John 2, I'm sorry, 1 John 1, 2, there's not a thing that was made in the world, whether angels or people or the material world itself, that didn't come through the triune Creator. Okay? Everything in this world that has been made was made by him. He is the Creator. Everything else is the created. And therefore the distance between category one and category two is infinite. They have totally different rules that they live by, the Creator and the created. And in that regard, no matter how high you climb in the category of the created, whether it's in the good created beings or the bad created beings, you're still infinitely far away from the transcendent Creator who holds all the cards. See? That's what the Bible teaches.

And that means that in this sense, the distance between God and the archangel Michael, or God and the leader of these evil angels, Satan, the distance between the two is the same as the distance between God and the ant that crawls around in my backyard looking for a little Hawaiian Punch to lick up, or the cockroach crawling around under the sink. I haven't seen any of those lately, but you've seen them. It doesn't matter. Michael and ant, they're both in the same category.

And that's why God one day, here's a good text to write down in Revelation chapter 20, verses 10 and 11, will take, without breaking a sweat at all, the most powerful angel of all and toss him into the lake of fire and say, see ya. Wouldn't want to be ya, right? Going away. Bye-bye. Gonna lock you up forever. And all of his angels are going to go with him. Another passage that says the same thing, Matthew chapter 25, verse 41. Going to toss them into the lake of fire. God has no equals. The Bible's really clear on that.

All right, mini excursus. We're back.

Hebrews chapter 1, real quick. Let's wrap this up. He's making a comparison between the Son and angels, and we're not going to do that anymore through the rest of the first two chapters. We may mention it, but it won't be the argument, because that's not an argument that we need. But we do need to appreciate these angels, don't we? And we appreciate something of their power. We appreciate the comparison. If we put ourselves in the sandals of the first-century Sabbath school graduate, we get it now.

### **3. Be wowed that God values you more**

Now, what about the whole upshot of the passage? What's the punch line here? Well, verse number 14 is telling of chapter 1, Hebrews 1:14. What's telling is that when you really think about angels and the Son, in their minds, wow, you're telling me that the Son is more powerful, more authoritative, got greater access to God than angels. That's amazing.

But if you tried to think about a comparison between measly old us, human beings, children of dust, children of Adam, and compare it to these amazingly authorized, powerful, wise angels, we'd say, well, there's no comparison there. They totally outrank us. Who are we? No one compared to the angels.

Now watch what happens in chapter 1, verse 14. He flips this around and he says, Let me just tell you this. All those angels, aren't they all just ministering spirits sent to, now here's the key word, serve those who will inherit salvation? Are not all angels ministering spirits, sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? Who's going to inherit salvation? We are. And the Bible says these incredible beings that these first-century Jews had an amazing high, lofty view of, hey, by the way, they're just serving you. Oh, me? You're kidding me. No, no, that's what they're there for. They're dispatched by heaven to serve you.

And you know what that would do to a first-century Jew? Wow. Wow. God has those here to serve me? Number three on your outline, let's jot it down. We need to be wowed. We really need to be wowed that God values you more. As a matter of fact, he puts you in a place where he says, angels, you're now here, man, you're here to serve my adopted children.

It's as though Bush is on his big ranch in Texas, and he has Card and the whole staff and cabinet, and he has Rumsfeld and all the brass from the military. And then he says, oh, by the way, I had Jenna go down and pick up 25 orphans from Tijuana, and I've just adopted them into the Bush family. So I'm going to bring them over here. Now, I just want to tell you, guys, you're no longer going to serve the country. You know what? Your job now is to serve my adopted kids. That's your job.

You know what the adopted kid, if he has half a brain, thinks this through, is going to say? Wow. Those guys with the power and authority and everything, they have access to the arsenal of what they've got. They're going to take all of that, and they're going to be used to serve us. Us? It would wow the adopted Tijuana kid to say, they're there for me.

## How do angels serve us?

They're there to serve me. How do they serve us? The Bible says they protect us. I don't know how, but the Bible's really clear on that. They protect us. Psalm 34:7. They're dispatched to protect us.

Reminds me of that 2 Kings chapter 6 situation where Elisha is there with his armor-bearer, his servant, remember that? And they got this army, and the armor-bearer's knees start to knock together, and Elisha prays that his eyes would be open, remember that? And his eyes are opened, and what's there? It says they were surrounded by thousands of these angels in chariots of fire there to protect them.

If we could just open our eyes to recognize that the most powerful, wise, authoritative beings in the universe stand at the ready by God's right hand to be dispatched to our lives to help us, we'd be amazed by that. We'd be overwhelmed by the amazing grace and love of God in our lives.

They're sent to answer our prayers. Daniel chapter 10. Daniel chapter 10 said this in verse 12. Let me remind you of it. He says, do not be afraid, Daniel, the angel said. Since the first day you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. I was dispatched to answer your prayers. Now, can God answer your prayers directly? Absolutely. God could do everything by himself, but he chooses sometimes to use us, so we know what that's like, the privilege of being used.

And angels are standing at the ready in the boardroom of heaven saying, you know what? Mike just prayed a prayer. Send me, I'll go help. I'll go do that. And they get dispatched to planet Earth to

interface with reality down here so that God would answer my prayers. Amazing. They were dispatched to Peter to answer the prayers of the early church in Acts chapter 12 to spring him from jail. Remember that? They were dispatched to help Elijah in the desert in 1 Kings chapter 19, to minister to him and bring him food and to encourage him. Same thing in Matthew 4 with Jesus himself.

And if, by the way, that's tantalizing to you and you start getting tempted now to start praying to the angels to answer your prayers, you know what they're going to say? Talk to my Boss. They're not interested in hearing from you. Because they don't want you asking them. As a matter of fact, Colossians 2 says, stop it with all this morbid interest in angels. What you need to do is be interested in connecting with their Boss. And you know what? You want something from angels and you talk to their Boss. They're standing ready to help. But you talk to the one in charge. So don't be praying to angels this week.

Oh, they assist us in worship. They assist us in worship. We gather this from verse number 6. It says that they are dispatched by God to worship the Son. Where is the Son worshiped? Well, he's worshiped in heaven. Yeah, Revelation chapter 4 and 5. But he's also worshiped, I would hope, this morning. If your heart connected with the words, you worshiped the Son this morning. And the angels are here as a part of our assembly. And if you don't believe that, we need to turn to one more passage. Hebrews chapter 12. Turn to this text. Hebrews chapter 12.

Look at verse number 22. He just talked about we're not coming back to Mount Sinai there at the base of the mount. And we're not coming to that assembly anymore. We're coming to a brand-new assembly. Matter of fact, in the new covenant, verse 22, you've come to Mount Zion, not Mount Sinai, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the city of the living God. Are you with me? This is Hebrews chapter 12, verse 22. You've come to, now note this, thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly.

Now, I might think that's heaven, but I don't go to heaven to worship. I go to my assembly to worship. In this case, I go here to worship. And the Bible goes on to say in the next verse, it says, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written not here, but they're written in heaven. That gives me the impression that the angels are here. How do they serve us? How do they get involved in our worship? That's an amazing thought, that powerful, wise angels who have been around from the creation of the world are interested as we gather to worship. It's amazing.

They protect us. They answer prayers on behalf of God, being dispatched by God. They assist us in worship. Apparently they join in with our worship, at least. How about this one? They are post-mortem escorts. That's just fun to write down. Post-mortem escorts. Luke chapter 16, verse 22. Jesus is telling a story about a guy who dies, and he said, and when he died, the angels carried him to Abraham's side. Remember that text?

I don't know what it's going to be like, but it'll be the first time I've ever experienced having my spirit be absent from my body, okay? That happens once, the Bible says. That's the end of life on this earth as I know it, and all of a sudden now I'm naked spiritually. I've never been naked spiritually, I'm glad to say. But I will the day I die, and my spirit's going to move out from my body. And then all of a sudden, guess who's going to be there in the spiritual realm when I'm materially naked for the first time? I'll have a few escorts.

"Hey, good to see you, man," whatever that's like—because they don't have mouths and I don't have ears at that point. But we're talking, and they're escorting me to wherever I'm supposed to be



next. “Oh yeah, wow, did that hurt? Come on. Let’s go.” I don’t know what they’re going to say. Say something to me.

But angels have a role to play in this. Spiritual entities. I’m a spiritual entity. I just happen to be trapped in a material body, and one day I’ll get a body back that’s a lot better than this one, and we’ll enjoy the world forever in a material place. God created us to live in that realm. Angels are different, though, but they’re going to meet us there when we’re extracted from our physical bodies.

One more thing, and I’ve got to throw this in. Hebrews chapter 2, verse 16. Back to chapter 2. An amazing, amazing truth here. Wrap it up with this one—verse 16. Actually, the context is good, and this is going to be a great section. We’ll probably turn this into a series about Jesus—why he took on flesh and blood and what that means for us.

But in verse 14 he says he did share in our humanity so that he could destroy death and the one who holds the power of death—that’s the devil—and to free those, verse 15, who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

For—now here’s an interesting statement to wrap up this whole discussion on angels—“for surely it is not angels he helps but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason he was made like his brothers in every way.” Did you catch that phrase there? “Not angels he helps.”

Now I just said, 2 Peter 2: angels sinned and humans sinned, and they both fell in a place of being alienated from God. Now you’ve got angels and you’ve got humans, and you know what God does? He sends his Son to redeem humans. And he says, “I’m going to go redeem humans.”

“Oh, it’s not the angels. They sinned? Well, sorry—you’re done. You get the consequences for what you did. But you know what? I’m going to focus my redemptive love on human beings. And I’m even going to participate in humanity so that I can redeem them.” That’s the whole logic of the passage. But I’m going to choose to love them. Really? Can you see that he’s loving us in a way—a redemptive love—that’s higher and more perfect than the angels? You see that, right? We’re valued. We’re valued above the angels in this regard.

And by the way, 1 Peter 1—I told you it was a lot of passages this morning—1 Peter 1 says (we won’t turn you there), but it says even angels long to look into this redemptive plan. They were just, “What is this? This is amazing.” “I know fallen angels. I knew angels I hung out with, and now they’re cast away from God’s presence. And you’re telling me you’re going to save those people that were cast away from you? You’re going to save humans and not angels? Wow. I need to know more about this redemptive love.”

Not too long ago there was a set of golf clubs that were sold for over \$750,000. They were sold at an auction. I mean think about that—that’s over three quarters of a million dollars for a set of golf clubs. And they were stained with grass, and they only had a few old golf balls in the pouch, and it wasn’t even a perfect set. They were scuffed and scratched up a little bit. But some guy went in there and cracked open his checkbook at an auction in New York and paid three quarters of a million dollars for a set of golf clubs.

Now I’ve got some clubs. They’re not quite that expensive. As a matter of fact, I keep them in the trunk of my car just in case a golf game breaks out somewhere. And they’re kind of nice clubs. They’re not great. They’re nice. But if I went down today after the service and found out that my



car—my Honda—was ripped off, you know what? I'd be a whole lot more sad about the car than I would my clubs. Totally. Because I've invested more in my car. I'm making payments on my car. The car is more to me than the clubs.

Now you think about this guy in New York. He just bought a three-quarter of a million dollar set of golf clubs. Now if he throws them in the trunk of his car and it gets ripped off in Manhattan, what do you think he's thinking about—the car or the clubs? The guy's never spent—never in his whole life spent—that much money cumulatively on all of his nice cars. He's never spent anything close to that, but he just spent three quarters of a million dollars on a set of golf clubs. He's caring a whole lot more about the clubs. Now to us that doesn't even make sense. A car—man, a car, it's a full car. You're making payments on a car. Clubs? You picked them up at Roger Dunn or whatever. They're clubs.

See, you know by the way why he spent three quarters of a million dollars on a set of golf clubs? Because they were auctioned off at a New York auction because they were John F. Kennedy's golf clubs. And therefore, in his mind, these are valuable clubs, and he was willing to spend an inheritance on a set of golf clubs. And because of whose they were—and because of the price he paid—you know what? The car pales by comparison. It doesn't matter too much.

You do realize that if you sit and look at us and you look at angels—you look at golf clubs and you look at a car—the average person is going to say, “Wow, the car—that's the valuable thing.” And God said, “No, no, no, no. Because you belong to God, and because I purchased you with the blood of my Son, you now are more valuable than the car.” And God has said, as a matter of fact, this valuable entity—this class of people, angels—they're going to be called over here to serve you. They're going to stand in awe of the love and the price that I paid for you guys. You are going to be the valuable thing. And God says, “My redemptive love toward you—man—that's everything. That's everything.”

And unfortunately a lot of us sit around—number one, we don't even think of angels. We don't even have any respect for angels. We laugh, scoff. We don't even know if they're real. And God says, “Oh, you're going to see how real they are. The second you're dead, you're going to see how real they are.” But when you see how majestic and powerful and authoritative they are, you're going to have to recognize this: God's grace and love for you is amazing. You've got to be wowed by that. Because God loves you way more than he's ever loved angels, and he's gone to the wall for your heart. We need to respond to that with a great deal of gratitude. Be humbled by the grace of God. Angels are fantastic, but they're standing around going, “Look at how God loves those humans. Amazing.”

Let's pray.

God, we do want to celebrate your love. We want to say thank you every time we look in the Word and we see directives like this to realize that your love has been targeting us and that the cost of your Son's life was spilled for our benefit—not angels—and that angels, these incredible beings that totally in every way outrank us, are now servants for us. It's all because you've made us valuable, not because we're valuable. We've just got scuffs and grass stains all over us, but we belong to you, and we've been purchased with the blood of your Son.



So today, God, I pray whatever we do, wherever we go this week, we will remember just how loved we are. What a great, amazing love you've lavished upon us. God, thanks for loving us like that and redeeming us. In Jesus' name, amen.