



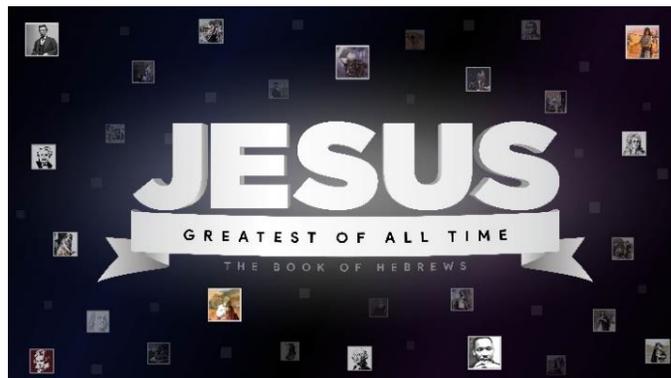
VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

The Book of Hebrews

Who's the Boss?

Hebrews 1:4-14

Tim Badal | September 20, 2020



We're going to be in Hebrews 1:1-14 this morning. I'll share some introductory thoughts, then we'll jump into addressing what the text says. In other words, I'll be talking around the text for a little bit, but I don't want you to be afraid we'll never get to it.

If you were with us last week, we embarked on this journey through the New Testament book of Hebrews. It's a difficult book. We talked about how intimidating it can be, because there is a lot in it that we in 21st century America may not readily understand. That's why we'll be doing some back study to understand where these Hebrew Christians were. What we do know without question, however, is that these people were followers of Jesus Christ who had given their lives to Him but found themselves wanting to give up. Their lives were filled with persecution. They had relational issues and other kinds of turmoil that centered on their commitment to Christ.

Some of you may find yourself in this situation as well. Your family may be in disarray or you may have challenges at work for reasons that have nothing to do with your personality. Rather, these are the result of your allegiance to Jesus.

Because these Hebrew people were also suffering for their loyalty to Jesus, they were being tempted to give up and give in. They wanted to go back to Old Testament Judaism, so all they needed to do was take Jesus out of the picture. Yet the author of Hebrews tells them over and over again that to give up Jesus would be to give up everything. It would be to give up the greatest thing God had ever given them. For this reason we will find argument upon argument in this book to remind the Hebrew people, and us, of the value of what Christians have so we will persevere in the faith we have come to love and enjoy.

The first topic the author addresses is that of angels. Right away you might ask, "Who would ever think that angels are better than Jesus?" Because of the New Testament and the early church creeds, we know without question that to diminish Jesus would be to enter into the world of cults. If we diminish Jesus, we are giving up the power of our relationship with God. But in the days of the Hebrews, this temptation was growing. We'll see this in the passage we'll be reading today from Hebrews 1.

Let's begin in verse four:

⁴Having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

⁵ For to which of the angels did God ever say,

"You are my Son,
today I have begotten you"?

Or again,

"I will be to him a father,
and he shall be to me a son"?

⁶ And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,

"Let all God's angels worship him."

⁷ Of the angels he says,

"He 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,
the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.

⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."

¹⁰ And,

"You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning,
and the heavens are the work of your hands;

¹¹ they will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like a garment,

¹² like a robe you will roll them up,
like a garment they will be changed.

But you are the same,
and your years will have no end."

¹³ And 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 serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

In the '80s and '90s, I was a kid who grew up with sitcoms, like many of you who are my peers. That was our evening entertainment. One of the sitcoms I especially remember was entitled, "Who's the Boss?" How many of you remember that one? It was story about a new kind of family: two parents who weren't married but who were in a platonic relationship. It started because a retired football player named Tony Micelli needed a job. The only job he could find was as a live-in housekeeper, taking over all the domestic duties for a woman named Angela, who was a high-powered advertising agent. To make the show funnier, they added in Angela's mother, who was a guy-crazy older woman who never seemed to be able to get her life together.

The whole premise of the show was to break down a lot of the traditional roles and responsibilities for men and women in the home. The producers intentionally created a platform to convince people that any activity was game for both men and women. Even the kids got involved. The ongoing question, of course, was, "Who's the boss? Who calls the shots? Who's in charge?" In every episode, the characters would vie for the position of authority in the household.

Why do I bring this up? It's because the book of Hebrews is also trying to answer the question of who's the greatest. When we answer that question, then we'll know who the boss is. One of the first arguments the author gives has to do with the role of angels. The angels were powerful creatures. The people of that day were wondering if Jesus was greater than the angels? Surely the angels were more powerful and had more in their resumes than Jesus did. Maybe He was something lesser than an angel. A debate broke out concerning the role Jesus played in their faith compared to that of the angels.

1. We identify who's the Boss by remembering an error that plagued the Christians in Hebrews.

For us to understand this, we need to realize a couple things. First, we need to remember an error that plagued the Christians in Hebrews. They had an idea that angels were of greater importance than Jesus. It's easy for us to sit back on the shoulders of Christians who for centuries have helped define these things for us. But in the New Testament era, we can understand how things weren't as clear for them. All they had to work with was the Old Testament. As they read the stories there, they saw how the angels did mighty deeds for God. In fact, in every prominent movement of God, angels played an important part.

For that reason, it wasn't uncommon in New Testament days for the people to see the role of angels in a somewhat similar fashion to the role of Marvel characters in our day. Yet while Marvel characters are fictitious, the Jews knew that the angels actually existed. They wanted to understand and act like the angels. They wanted to put their trust in the angelic armies God so often used in strategic situations to accomplish His will. In fact, in the Old Testament there are more than 100 different references to angels. In each case, the angels seem to play center stage.

- An angel took Adam and Eve out of the Garden and sealed the entrance.
- Angels visited Abraham and Sarah to prophesy the birth of Isaac.
- Angels delivered Lot from Sodom.
- Angels were in Jacob's vision of a stairway to heaven.
- One angel alone brought Pharaoh to his knees during the final plague by striking down the firstborn in all of Egypt.
- Angels shared their food in the form of manna with the children of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness.
- Angels brought the law from God to Moses on Mt. Sinai.
- Angels also strengthened the great prophet Elijah so he wouldn't die.
- One angel rescued Israel from pending defeat by destroying 185,000 Assyrians in one night.
- An angel appeared in a fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.
- And it was an angel who kept Daniel alive in the lions' den.

While it's easy for us to see that Jesus is the greatest figure of all history, can you imagine for a moment how this might not be as obvious to the Israelites who were suffering persecution, wishing an angel would come their way to rescue them? We can understand why the first-century Hebrews would hope for the deliverance they had read about in their Scriptures. In fact, almost every supernatural event in the history of their people had angels who played an important role in it.

During the time Hebrews was being written, there was a very popular book being circulated called The Assumption of Moses. This isn't a book in our Bibles, but it is quoted there. In Jude 9, the writer of Jude speaks of an event that involved the devil, Michael the archangel and the body of Moses. When Moses died, the devil wanted to use his body for some purpose. Perhaps he wanted to desecrate it because Moses was highly honored by the Israelites. Perhaps he wanted to appear to resurrect Moses and lead the people back to Egypt before they actually entered the Promised Land. We don't know.

Jude 9 refers to the story that's written in The Assumption of Moses, with the devil and Michael disputing about the body of Moses. Michael got the body because he invoked the title of the Lord Jesus Christ, saying, "The Lord rebuke you."

All of this talk about angels led even the best of Christians to go sideways regarding their role. In Colossians 2:18, where Paul is writing to one of his most mature and devout churches, he even had to tell them, "Stop worshiping angels." For us, it doesn't make sense, but for them angels were much more highly revered.

So the writer of Hebrews wants us to know in the opening of his book that the angels aren't the all in all. They're great, but Jesus is greater. They're big, but Jesus is bigger. We might think, "But these readers knew about Jesus and all He had done." But in their case, these were oral stories. The book of Hebrews was written about 30 years after Christ lived on the earth. For some of you young people, that might seem like a long time, but for us who are older, it's easy to remember back that far. How many of you older people remember with great admiration 1990? Those were the good old days, right? No technology, nobody could get ahold of you, you never found where you were wanting to drive to—you remember those days, right? My youngest son often asks me, "How did you live back then?" We did and we did just fine.

So 30 years had passed since Jesus was on earth. Let's say we are the people who received the letter written to the Hebrews. Some of you were there when Jesus was doing His miracles. Maybe you were part of the feeding of the 5,000. Maybe you were there at Golgotha when Jesus was hung on the cross. Maybe you had heard the news that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Maybe you were one of the 500 who saw Him at one time.

In light of all the Hebrew Scriptures have to say about angels, let's honestly look at Jesus' pedigree from their perspective. Jesus did some great things. He fed a meal to 5,000 people. But then, the angels fed three million daily for 40 years. Jesus spoke about freedom and victory, but He never destroyed Israel's enemies like the angel did to Sennacherib's army. Jesus could have saved John the Baptist—but He didn't. The angels made sure Elijah was protected from the prophets of Baal. Jesus wasn't helping them in their time of persecution,

even though the Christians in the first century were begging Him to. Many were losing their lives and their property. They read the story in Daniel and remembered how the angels kept Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego alive in the fire and Daniel alive in a lions' den.

If I were part of the original audience, I honestly would wonder about these things. Angels traveled wherever they wished and they were strong. Jesus seemed meek and mild. He even had to walk wherever He went. It seems like the angels have a lot more going on, so therefore would be worthy of our worship. Maybe Jesus was like one of the angels, but He was like us when He was here and I know I'm not an angel. Some might have thought, "I saw Jesus, or my dad saw Jesus, and He didn't seem to be anything great to look at. I like Jesus, but I'm going to worship the angels."

There were two problems with their thinking. First, they elevated the angels to an improper level. Secondly, they devalued Jesus to a place that was actually blasphemous. And that's what our world does as well. Maybe it's not angels for us, but we elevate other things to higher places, while looking at Jesus as being just a good teacher or a good role model, thinking He's not the divine Son of God.

Actually, people are becoming more and more infatuated with angels even in our day. We decorate our houses with them. We watch television shows about them. What we're actually getting involved with are not angels, but demons. I can't tell you how many times I've had to say "Time out" in a Bible study or a conversation, because people have raised demons or the devil to a place that makes them equal with God.

Jesus is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent—He is everywhere at all times. Can I tell you three things the devil is not? He is none of those things. I hear Christians all the time describing the devil. Do you know how Martin Luther described the devil? He said, "The devil is a dog on a leash being walked around by God Himself." We need to admit that we can fall into the same error that the people in the first century did when we elevate beings to the same level as God.

What then should we do about this? The writer of Hebrews brings up the subject of angels because his readers needed to be clear about this. This is the longest passage in the New Testament that addresses the work and status of angels.

2. We identify who's the Boss by revisiting the biblical profile of angels.

I could spend weeks doing a series on angels—and maybe we will at some point—but right now I want to give you some basic understandings. Once we see how good they are, we'll also see how much better Jesus is. Instead of allowing our imaginations to get the best of us, here's what we need to know.

Angels are immortal.

Angels do exist. Every Christian should affirm this. But we should also realize that while angels are immortal, they are not eternal. Immortal means they don't die, but they haven't existed forever. At some point—we don't know when or how or where—they had a beginning. We know they existed when creation took place. We read in Job 38:4-7 that angels were present and were singing praises to God as He brought the world into existence. As He was putting the universe into place, they were exclaiming, "Yay God! You are awesome! You are an incredible Creator!"

We also know that the fall from heaven involved a third of the angels who followed Lucifer—the devil—in his rebellion against God and that this took place before creation as well. The Bible tells us the devil was in the Garden of Eden, so his fall came before Adam and Eve were created.

Angels are innumerable.

Another thing we need to know about angels is that they're innumerable, which means they cannot be counted. Daniel 7:10 describes angels this way: "*a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.*" That's biblical terminology for more than you can count. Just keep adding zeroes. Another way the Old Testament speaks of them is "myriads upon myriads."

The angels are everywhere. They're here. We can't see them, but I am fully confident that we are entertaining angels unaware. That should freak some of you out. That means when you're by yourself, there are angels there. It will change what you watch. It will change the way you talk. It's going to change what you do. There are angels all over the universe.

Angels are impressive creatures.

Everything we hear about angels is impressive. They're extremely strong and have great abilities. There don't seem to be any puny angels along with the stronger angels. There are however different classes of angels. We're told that before he fell, the devil was the chief cherub. We know that Gabriel and Michael are archangels, which is a special class. There are also ministering angels we'll talk about in a moment who are influential in human affairs. We've seen this in the many biblical references to angels that we've already listed.

Basically we're also told that angels do three things:

Angels worship God.

First, they worship. We read this in Isaiah 6 when Isaiah is given a heavenly vision of the throne room of God. One of the first things he sees are hosts of angels flying around, singing back and forth to one another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty." This is where we get the idea that angels are part of choir. When the birth of Jesus is announced in Bethlehem, an angelic choir appears to the shepherds. This is why we have songs saying things like "Angels we have heard on high" and "Hark, the herald angels sing." Angels are worshipers of God.

Angels wage war.

Second, angels wage war. We see them over and over again during times of battle, whether between humans or in the spirit realm. The Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 6:12, "*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood...*" So what do we wrestle against? It's the spiritual principalities that are all around us. It's an invisible war, but it's manifested in what we see and hear. Second Kings 19:35 reminds us that it only takes one angel to destroy almost 200,000 armed men. They are powerful creatures.

Angels bear witness.

Angels worship God, they wage war and finally, angels bear witness. Over and over again we read about angels bringing messages from God to people. We see this most clearly in the events of the Christmas story in Luke 1 and 2. Angels were sent to speak to different individuals to tell them what God was doing in those days.

Can you understand now why these first-century Christians thought so highly of angels? Hopefully you're beginning to see why the author of Hebrews needed to take time to explain the truth about Jesus' relationship to the angels. Let's now look at the ten verses in which he makes this clear.

3. We identify who's the Boss by recognizing the place of supremacy Jesus has over angels.

We've dealt with the error that was confusing the Hebrews, then we looked at a biblical profile of angels. Now we can identify who's boss by recognizing the place of supremacy Jesus has over angels. All we've seen so far is the backdrop to our passage today. Remember, the writer of Hebrews was speaking to a group of people who thought the angels were everything because for them the Old Testament Scriptures were what they had built their faith on. Notice in this discussion that the writer uses seven Old Testament passages to prove his point that Jesus is superior to the angels.

Essentially what he tells his readers is, "A lot of the things you ascribe to angels was actually the work of the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ." They didn't understand it was actually the second Person of the Trinity—the Son of God—Who was doing many of those things. We can identify these events when the Scriptures use the phrase, "The Angel of the Lord..." Theologians believe that refers to Jesus Christ Himself. So, who was in the furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? Jesus. Who was the angel who destroyed the Assyrian army? Jesus. Who sends the angels to the places they go? Jesus.

Hebrews 1:7 says, "*He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.*" Who's the boss? Jesus is the Boss. Let's recognize three things the writer of Hebrews gives us to prove this.

Jesus is the Boss because His name is more excellent. He is called Son!

First, the name of Jesus is more excellent because He alone is called Son. We read in Hebrews 1:5-7:

⁵For to which of the angels did God ever say,

“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you”?

Or again,

“I will be to him a father,
and he shall be to me a son”?

⁶And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,

“Let all God’s angels worship him.”

⁷Of the angels he says,

“He makes his angels winds,
and his ministers a flame of fire.”

If you write in your Bible, make a note that the author is describing how Jesus’ relationship with the Father is superior to that of the angels. Dads, think of it this way. When you say, “There’s my son,” or “There’s my daughter,” you’re speaking of a special relationship. There are a lot of kids in this place, but I’ll tell you, there are only three who have that special place in my heart: Noah, Joshua and Luke. Why? They live with me. They know my business. They know the details of my life because they’re my sons. They will inherit the little money I have if I don’t spend it all on myself and my wife.

There is communication between Father and Son that angels don’t have.

The author is emphasizing that none of the angels have this kind of relationship with the Father; only Jesus has this place. First, the Son and the Father communicate in ways the angels cannot. While the angels do dwell in heaven with the Father, not all that God knows has been revealed to them. The Trinity communicates in ways no one else does. If the angels knew everything God knows, they themselves would be God—and they’re not. They don’t know all things, but the Son does.

There are a couple things we need to be careful with. He says, *“To which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you’?”* You might get a knock at the door and some nicely dressed people will tell you, “Your church has been deceiving you all this time. We’re from the Jehovah’s Witnesses.” Most of you are too afraid to talk with them, so you shut the door and walk away, but I love it, so my response is, “Come on in and let’s talk about this.” Jehovah’s Witnesses believe Jesus is not God, but only the first created being, just before the angels were created. That’s from the pit and smells like smoke. What does it mean, then, when it says Jesus was begotten? It doesn’t mean Jesus was created, but that He was given. The Son was given to us in Bethlehem.

There is worship of the Son that angels don’t have.

Notice how verse six says, *“And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, ‘Let all God’s angels worship him.’”* Go back to Luke 1 and 2, to the Bethlehem countryside. When Jesus was ushered into the world in human flesh, what did the angels do? They sang and worshiped Him. They were astonished that He would leave His throne to become human.

Another thing we see about the relationship between the Father and Son is found in 2 Samuel 7:14: *“I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.”* This speaks of function, not being. Notice that He’s not a father like I’m a father to my sons. Rather, this describes the oneness of the three Persons of the Triune God. How is that fleshed out? They are divided by their functions. The Father has a function the Son doesn’t. The Son has a function the Father doesn’t. The best way to explain them is like a father-to-son function, but that doesn’t change their being. They are one in being.

Finally, the writer quotes Deuteronomy 32:43, which nails it all to the wall. The writer quotes this passage in Hebrews 1:6. Because Jesus is the Son and the Creator and the Sustainer and the Heir of all things, there is only one response from the angels: worship. If the angels’ only response is to worship Jesus, then what do you think our response needs to be? Worship.

Jesus is the Boss because His place is elevated above all others. He sits on the throne!

So if verses four through seven are about relationship, then what are verses eight through 13 about? They're about His royalty. Throughout these verses the royalty of Jesus is described through various forms of imagery. For example, in verses three through 14 we see mention of Jesus being seated or being on a throne. In the days of the Hebrews, kings were active. It was rare that a king actually sat on his throne. Why? They were usually out with their armies fighting battles. If you remember, the night King David fell into lust for Bathsheba, he should not have been in his palace; he should have been out fighting with his men. The only time a king would have been seated on his throne would have been if all his enemies had been vanquished. Jesus is forever seated on His throne, so what does that tell us about His enemies? They're defeated.

Also, kings weren't able to sit on their thrones very often because they usually had problems with their subjects that they had to travel and attend to. The kingdom wasn't entirely under their control. But Jesus is seated because He can rule perfectly. Not only are His enemies vanquished, but His Kingdom is under control. In our chaotic world, we are able to worship the greatest King, knowing that He has this kingdom under control.

Even beyond the present, however, we know from verse 13 that there is a day coming when the Father will make Jesus' enemies His footstool. This is huge. We might read over that quickly and think, "That's nice." But in the day of this letter, when a king had overcome an enemy, the practice was to bring the highest generals of the defeated army to the palace. Then the king would sit on his throne, raise up his feet and they would push the generals to the ground so he could put his feet on their backs. Talk about humiliation. Talk about sticking their nose in their defeat.

We also read in Revelation how the devil is chained with a great chain and then is brought into the presence of God, where God makes him along with all God's enemies to be the footstool of Jesus. This is the Jesus Whom we serve. Do you think the angels can compete with that? I don't think so. Jesus is the Boss.

Jesus is the Boss because His ministry is more extensive. He serves but also saves!

Finally, Jesus' ministry is more extensive than that of the angels. In verse 14 we read this about the angels: "*Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?*" Yep, they do that. This is where we get the idea of guardian angels. I'll be asked from time to time, "Do you believe in guardian angels?" Yes, I believe in them. I believe in ministering angels. I can't tell you how many times I've almost thrown myself into oncoming traffic in my car. Why? Because I'm looking at my radio or grabbing a text from one of you people. Don't text and drive. But at just the right time, somehow I am able not only to focus but also to avoid hurling myself into an oncoming car or into a tree. You might say, "Tim, you're Mario Andretti." I'm going to say, "It was probably an angel."

How many times have we done stupid things, men, like putting ourselves on the top rung of a ladder, stretching out to paint that one corner—only to fall 20 feet to our demise, but not die? Your wife says, "That was stupid." Well, you're just proving that there are angels out there.

Angels are all around us and they're here to serve. While angels can serve, Jesus is the only One Who can save. Did you know that angels look into things like our salvation? In 1 Peter 1:12 we read how there are things into which angels "*long to look.*" These are the aspects of redemption they can't understand. Why is that? Well, when the angels rebelled against God, He threw them down to hell. One and done. That's my kind of parenting. But then God created a creature a little lower than the angels. In so many ways, we're not as strong or powerful or magnificent as angels are. Then God placed these fragile new beings in a garden and He walked and talked with them. That's something the angels have done as well. But then Adam and Eve did the same thing the angels did—they rebelled against God. The angels then assumed, "Well, they're headed to hell, too. That's what happened to a third of our brothers, the fallen angels. They're in gloomy dungeons now, awaiting the judgment. That's what's going to happen to Adam and Eve." That's probably what the angel thought who was assigned to walk them out of the garden.

Instead, God told Adam and Eve, "There will be One among your offspring Who will reconcile you back to Me." The angels must have said, "Wait. Time out. You're going to do what? You're going to give them a second chance? That doesn't make sense." But then Jesus knocks their socks off. We say it happened on December 25 in the year zero, although we really don't know exactly when it was. Jesus got up off His throne and said, "I'm going down to earth and I'm going to become one of them." "You're going to do what? You're going to put on flesh and make Your dwelling among them?" "Yes. Not only am I going to walk among them, but they're going to rebel against

me. They're going to curse Me and say I'm the son of the devil. They're going to beat and abuse Me, then put Me on a cross. When they do that, the devil is going to think I've been defeated, but in that glorious and miraculous moment I'm going to redeem those puny humans back to Myself." The angels hear that and they wonder, "Why don't these people get more amped up for Christmas and Easter?" These are amazing holidays we celebrate, not because of Santa Claus or the Easter bunny, but because the God of the universe made a way where there was no way. That's why Jesus is better than the angels.

Application: Don't lift up angels; instead, follow their lead by making much of Christ and ministering to other believers.

Let's quickly consider an application—just one takeaway. This is what I hope marks your week. Don't lift up angels. Instead, follow their lead by making much of Jesus and ministering to other believers. Don't put angels where they don't need to go, but follow their example. Angels love praising Jesus—do you? Is worshiping part of your daily life? Angels love to serve—do you? Do you love to serve, being put on mission for God? This is what we should do when we think about angels. As we minister to others and imitate what angels do, we will make much of Jesus in the process. He is greater than the angels.

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