

3. Above all the angels

December 28, 2014

A fire team of 3-5 soldiers is the most basic unit in the American Military . There are 2-4 teams in a squad; 2-4 squads make a platoon; 2-6 platoons make a company; 2-6 companies make a battalion; 2-5 battalions make a brigade; 2-4 brigades make a division which is somewhere around 10,000-20,000 soldiers.

To have an effective fighting force, military must have a hierarchy and clear organization of the chain of command. I wouldn't be surprised if someone tells me that humans mirrored this organizational formation from the heavenly angels. Because according to the Bible, we find the angels in heaven also have a hierarchy – Michael the archangel, Gabriel the messenger, and other thousands upon thousands of angels. But these angels are spiritual creatures of God the Creator .

The angels clearly understand who their Commander is – the Lord. The first and last angel who didn't get it and revolted against God got kicked out of heaven with 1/3 of his cohorts.

This morning we not only will learn the fact that the Lord Jesus is above all the angels, but we also will learn more about Jesus Himself . I am not interested in just learning more about angels, unless what I learn about them brings me closer to our Savior and Lord.

A. BECOMING BETTER THAN ANGELS

Hebrews 1:4-6 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a (1) more excellent name than they. 5 For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today (2) I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"? 6 But when He again (3) brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

To be honest with you, v4 caused me to struggle because of the words, " *having become.*" My questions were: How can Jesus become better than the angels? Does it mean that He was less than angels? Does it mean that Jesus was not " All Powerful God" at the beginning and later He became better? Doesn't the Bible say, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever"? I didn't like my own understanding of v4 at all.

You see, I have this principle in studying the Word of God: "Whatever I think goes out the window if it goes against the Word of God. Because what the Bible says is God's everlasting and unchangeable facts and truths, but what I think is nothing more than a man's flimsy opinion."

So I went over other well-prepared translations of the Bible:

v4 This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names. NLT

v4 So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs. NIV

v4 having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. NASB

v4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. KJV

These translations didn't solve my dilemma. I turned to the original Greek word to understand the nuance of the words. Its Greek word is "ginomai" and its definition is "become, to be made". That didn't help me either.

While I was struggling here with this v4, I neglected another principle of mine in studying the Word of God: "The best way to interpret the Bible is using the Bible." The Holy Spirit, my personal Tutor from God the Father, who was sent by the Lord Jesus as He did to all the born-again Christians, whispered to me in my heart, "Philippians 2." Hallelujah!!! I got the crystal clear answer from the Lord. After that Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2 came to my mind:

Philippians 2:6-7 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

Psalm 8:5 For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor.

When Jesus became a man, He became lower than the angels. But when He resurrected Himself from the dead, He became so much better than the angels, actually went back to being God the Creator with the Final Authority.

The OT Laws came to the Hebrew people through their ancestor Moses, but the better covenant came through a far superior Being, Jesus. The majority of the Jews in the first century thought that the Gospels were made by a group of mere men – the apostles, but the Gospels are all about Jesus Christ and they came from Jesus Himself who is far superior to any angels.

1) In v4, I asked you to underline "more excellent name".

What name? "My Son". Angels are collectively called "the sons of God" and no angel would be given this title individually.

2) In v5, the Bible says, "I have begotten You".

The author of the Book of Hebrews was quoting this from Psalm 2:7. Do you know someone else who quoted this and explained when this 'begetting' was done?

Apostle Paul did in the Book of Acts in chapter 13:

Acts 13:33 God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'

The Greek word "gennao" is "begotten" and our English word "genetic" was derived from this word's family. The Greek word "gennao" speaks of the equality of substance and essential nature between the Father and the Son.

3) In v6, it says, "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

You don't worship anyone who is equal with you, rather someone who is much greater. Jehovah's Witness people consider Jesus as former Michael, the archangel. Mormon people consider him as a brother of Lucifer, which is satan. Contrary to their false theologies, the angels belong to Jesus, and He was NOT and is NOT one of them.

B. WHO CREATED THE ANGELS AND WHEN?

Hebrews 1:7 And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire."

Have you ever thought about this? Who did create the angels in heaven and when did that happen? There is not a whole lot of biblical references regarding the timing of the creation of the angels in the Bible.

But one thing is for sure that they have not existed from all eternity .

Colossians 1:16-17 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

The time of their creation is never definitely specified, but it is most probable that it occurred in connection with the creation of the heavens in Genesis 1:1. It may be that God created the angels immediately after He had created the heavens and before He created the earth. How do I know for sure? According to Job 38:4-7:
Job 38:4-7 "Where were you [Job] when I [God] laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. 5 Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6 To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, 7 When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

I know what you are thinking. You are thinking, "You mean that after God created the heaven and before He created the earth, He created the host of angels. And one of them, the angel Lucifer had enough time to revolt against God and convinced 1/3 of the angels to join him? Are you telling me that all this happened within the 24 hour period?" Do you know why we have hard time understanding it? It is because we think the whole thing in the limitation of human 's 24 hour timeline. But in heaven, there is NO time limit.

2 Peter 3:8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing , that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day .

C. THE FATHER CALLING THE SON GOD

Hebrews 1:8-12 But to the Son He says: " Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions." 10 And: "You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. 11 They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment; 12 Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not fail."

There are 2 quotes from the OT in this section of the Scripture. The author of this Book is quoting the OT Scripture because it is familiar to the ancient Hebrews, the very people who were reading this letter. The author was explaining to them that the OT already was describing Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah and their God.

V8-9 were quoting Psalm 45:6-7. God the Father is speaking to God the Son. This is a very powerful evidence of the deity of Jesus Christ. If God the F ather call Jesus "God," then how can anyone else call Jesus anything else?

In the second half of v9, we see the relationship and actions of the T rinity:

Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions

"God, Your God" speaks of the Father and His position of authority over the Second Person of the Trinity. "You" refers to the Son. "Anointed" has in mind the ministry and presence of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity.

Again, in v10, the Father affirms Jesus as the Creator of the universe by saying:

You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth

Whenever you see the all capital letters 'LORD' in the Bible, it refers to "Yahweh," a.k.a. "YHWH."

In v11-12, all the created beings can be finished and extinguished, but Jesus the Lord God is self-existent and does not change.

D. JESUS ON THE THRONE, ANGELS SERVING

Hebrews 1:13-14 But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"? 14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

V13 was quoted from Psalm 110:1. No angel ever sits on the throne. The last angel who tried to do that didn't go well for him:

Isaiah 14:12-14 "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! 13 For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'

There are no seats for the angels around the throne of God because they are constantly busy praising the Lord and serving Him by doing His work. But Jesus sits at the right hand of God the Father at His invitation. Jesus is not a subject, rather He is the Sovereign God.

Then, you have to ask yourself, why does the author of this Book go to great lengths to explain that Jesus is above the angels? It is because there was a lot of angel worship among the first century Jewish people.

The angels who serve the Lord have a couple of job descriptions among many. They minister to the followers of Jesus Christ, but they become the delivery agents of God's judgments to the unbelievers of God:

1) To the believers

Not only angels around us protect us, but they also minister to us through the promises and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 91:1-2 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."

Did you get that? Our Lord is our secret Hiding Place, our Refuge, and our Fortress. In Him we can trust, find rest. Like your children run to you for your protection, when we go to the Lord, He often would protect us and minister to us through His angels.

When Daniel was fasting and praying to the Lord in Daniel chapter 10, an angel was delayed 21 days because of the demonic forces until Michael the archangels came to reinforce him. Then the angel was able to minister to Daniel and explained the vision he received from the Lord.

2) To the unbelievers

In the Book of Revelation 8 and 9, you see seven angels blow their trumpets. Each time the angel blows his trumpet, serious, serious disasters happen on earth. In the same Book chapter 16, seven angels dump bowls from heaven to earth. More devastating outcomes happen all over the earth. They are God's judgment against the unbelievers through the angels.

In the past, two angels called down God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah with brimstone and fire as soon as Lot's family escaped.

E. APPLICATION

Do not be deceived into any false theology of angel worship.

They are our fellow servants to worship and to serve the Lord.

Colossians 2:18a Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels