



Daily Verse and Comment

Hebrews 1:4-9

(4) Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. (5) For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? (6) And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. (7) And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. (8) But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. (9) Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

King James Version

Overall, the Jews generally had high regard for angels, and well they might. Part of the reason is contained in the word translated “direction” in [Acts 7:53](#), at the end of Stephen's speech to the Sanhedrin: “. . . who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.” The underlying term in Greek is *diatage*, which is capable of wide usage, suggesting “put into order,” “delivered,” “given,” or “put into effect.” The King James Version translates it elsewhere as “delivered,” “given,” “put into effect,” and “through.” The *Key Word Study Bible* suggests, however, that since the [Old Testament](#) says nothing of angels doing anything significant except being present when the law was given, the most suitable translation would be “instrumentality” (as *The Amplified Bible* does).

Stephen undoubtedly refers to [Deuteronomy 33:1-2](#):

Now this is the blessing with which [Moses](#) the man of [God](#) blessed the children of Israel before His death. And he said:

The LORD came from Sinai,
And dawned on them from Seir;
He shone forth from Mount Paran,
And He came with ten thousands of saints;
From His right hand
Came a fiery law for them.

Moses speaks of the giving of the law and the making of the Old Covenant. The term “saints” in this context is literally “holy ones.” In this circumstance, it could only be angels.

[Psalm 68:17](#) also mentions the attendance of angels on this occasion: “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of thousands; the LORD is among them as in Sinai, in the Holy Place.” The chariots of God, to put it in human terms, refer to angels being the chariots' drivers, manning the vehicles of God's military might.

The apostle Paul writes in [Galatians 3:19](#):

What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.

The Amplified Bible (1987 version) translates this final phrase as “arranged *and* ordained *and* appointed through the instrumentality of angels.”

Remember that the holy angels were and still are sinless. In this way, we can grasp the biblical reasons why the Jews had so much respect for them.

Thus, the apostle Paul confirms that God did indeed use angels to some extent at Sinai when He gave the law, but he gives no specific details. The author of Hebrews shows that even though the Old Testament does not detail the part angels played in the giving of the law and the Old Covenant, the Old Testament does show that angels were strongly represented. Overall, angels played a prominent role in a wide variety of situations.

From these mentions and many more, the Jews esteemed angels more highly than men. This is a natural reaction to biblical revelation and a good one, yet

they attracted the admiration of the Jews for other reasons too, like what [Psalm 103:20](#) says of them: “Bless the LORD, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word.” “Strength” represents enhanced traits such as intelligence, [wisdom](#), and the obedience that is specifically mentioned. They are not merely spiritual robots.

[Psalm 104:4](#), quoted in [Hebrews 1:7](#), adds, “. . . Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire.” They are God's ministers, who serve Him as He sees fit. They are of such quality that they occupy positions at the top of the divine, governmental hierarchy. We can easily conclude that God carries on much of the administration of the creation through them.

But as elevated as angels are in God's placement of them within His governance of creation, and as glorious as they are in their innate powers, they are nevertheless subject to the Lord Jesus, even as humans are. One who was made a little lower than angels, however, has ascended to heaven to the right hand of God the Father. There is now a glorified Man in heaven, who has attained a station exceedingly higher than any angels' position. In the end, angels are still mere created creatures, as we are, and thus He, [Jesus Christ](#), their Creator and God, is immeasurably higher than they.

For the Jews to be told that Jesus of Nazareth was God incarnate—that is, God made flesh—and the Messiah, yet He suffered death despite possessing glory and dignity far exceeding that of anyone on earth, excelling even that of heavenly angels, was something beyond their ability to accept readily. One of the points the author of Hebrews makes, although he never states it directly, is that the Old Covenant, in reality, achieved no higher than angelic mediation, though that in itself is impressive. In the making of the New Covenant, Jesus Christ, their Creator, replaced the angels in all their covenantal activities. God Himself mediates the New Covenant, putting it on an exceedingly higher level than the Old Covenant.

Knocking down the angelic argument proved to be an excellent place for the author of Hebrews to begin. Why? Because He establishes Christ's superiority above all who might be considered in His place, including even those the Jews respected most highly, angels.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

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