Jesus’ Superiority and Our Priority

Hebrews 1:1-14

Key Verse: 1:2 “but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.”

We thank God for helping us to finish studying the book of Revelation and start the book of Hebrews from this week. As the name of the book tells, Hebrews is the letter for Hebrew Christians, Messianic Jews in modern terms, who were struggling with persecutions from outside and deception from inside. We don’t know who the writer of Hebrews is. Some said that it is Paul while others said that it is Apollos or Barnabas. The obvious thing is that the writer must be an expert of the Old Testament and the Jewish priestly system. The date of writing is estimated around 70 AD before the temple was destroyed. The theme is the supremacy and the sufficiency of Christ Jesus. The writer explains throughout the whole book why Jesus is superior to all people and all things on this earth. Let’s study why Jesus is superior to all things, especially to angels, and think about what Jesus’ superiority means for us in today’s passage.

Part 1. God’s Final Word: His Son: In verses 1-4 the author introduces who the Son is by describing him in seven ways like rainbow. A rainbow has seven different colors, but it appears in perfect beauty and harmony. Let’s see how the Son Jesus is described here. Look at verses 1-3. “***In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven***.” Here, the word ‘In the past’ indicates the era of the OT before Jesus was born. In the era of the OT God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times in various ways. For example, God spoke to Abraham directly and indirectly when he was called. God also spoke his message to Pharaoh through Moses and through the plagues. God gave the Ten Commandments at Mt Sinai through Moses and established the covenant with his people Israel. (Ex 19:5,6) God delivered his message of judgment and restoration through 4 major and 12 minor prophets. God revealed his will through Psalms, Hymns, and signs. But in these last days God speaks to us by his Son, not by prophets or priests. Here these last days are not the eschatological endtime, but the era of New Testament after Jesus was born. After Jesus came, God has spoken to us through his son Jesus. This is a great blessing and privilege for us to hear God’s message directly from Jesus and through Jesus. Amen! Of course today God speaks to us by his Son through the Holy Spirit. Jesus speaks to us through the Holy Spirit. As Jesus said in John’s gospel, the Holy Spirit teaches us all things and reminds us of everything Jesus taught us. (Jn 14:26)

What is the first picture (color) of Jesus that the author describes in verse 2. First, Jesus is **the Son** whom God appointed **heir** of all things. The Son is an heir, heir of all things. In general, an heir inherits his father’s right, authority, name, and possession. If his father is a king, his son inherits his kingship and kingdom as an heir. Second, Jesus, the Son, is the Creator of the world. Verse 2 says, “*and through whom also he made the universe*.” John 1:3 explains this well. “*Through him (the Son) all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made*.” This means that the Son participated in the creation of the world with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Third, The Son is the radiance of God’s glory. The word ‘radiance’(*apaugasma*) means brightness, the reflected brightness, in Greek terms. The son reflects the brightness of the Father’s glory (*doxa*). This reminds us of John 1:14 says, “….*We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth*.” Fourth, the Son is the exact representation of his being. Here ‘exact representation’ translates ‘*charakter*’ in Greek. It sounds character or image in English. The Son has the exact character and image of God the Father. In John 14:9 Jesus said to Philip his disciple who asked to show him the Father, “*Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father*?’” Fifth, “sustaining all things by his powerful word.” The Son sustains all things by his powerful word. Here the word ‘sustain’ in Greek is *phero,* and it has many meanings. KJV translates *phero* as ‘uphold’. The Son Jesus upholds all things by his powerful word. The word of Jesus keeps creation order, and it has power to save souls. For example, Jesus calmed the storm by his words. Jesus restored peace. By his word he also saved the two demon-possessed men when he commanded the demons, “Come out of them!” The powerful words of Jesus restored our lost paradise. The word, ‘*phero*’ also has the meaning of bringing forth. In the Parable of the Sower the good soil brings forth the crop thirty, sixty, and one hundred times. The Son produces many lives by his powerful words. Lastly the word *phero* also has meaning of carry burden and bear with patience. Jesus carried our burden of sin and went up to the hill to fulfill the Father’s will. Jesus the Son sustains all things in many ways by his powerful words. Amen!

Sixth, the Son provided purification for sins. Look at verse 3b again, “*After he had provided purification for sins…*” How Jesus provided purification for sins is well described in chapter 8-10. As our eternal High Priest, Jesus sacrificed his own body, not animals, and brought his own blood, not with animal’s blood, and entered into the Most Holy Place, once for all, not every year, for our eternal salvation. No one else on this earth, not even angels, provided purification for our sins, but Jesus the Son alone. Seventh, the Son is our eternal king. Verse 3 continues, “…*he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven*.” Sitting at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven means that the Son is exalted highly as our eternal king. Revelation 17:14 describes the Son as King of kings and Lord of lords. Amen! The Son, not angels, is the only one who is worthy of sitting with the Father at the throne in heaven.

In verse 4 the author makes conclusion that in all ways the Son is superior to the angels. Look at verse 4. “***So he became as much as superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs***.” Why then did the author mention Jesus’ superiority to angels? Angel is *angelo* in Greek, which means messenger or agent. In a word angel is God’s agent and servant. A servant is different from the Son. The Son is much superior to servants. The name of Jesus is superior to all angels who appear in the Bible such as Michael, Gabriel, Cherub, Seraph, and so on.

In ancient years Jews believed that angels are superior to any other human being. Chapter 2:9 says, “*But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor…*” Angels are intermediate spiritual beings between God and men. Jews also believed that angels were involved in giving the law at Mt. Sinai. Chapter 2:2 says, “*For since the message spoken through angels was binding*…”

Part 2, the Son is superior to angels (5-14) In verses 5-14 The author continues to explain the superiority of Jesus over angels by quoting 7 references from the OT. Based on these references I want to summarize the reason why the Son Jesus is superior to angels. First, God did not call any angel, ‘Son’, but Jesus. Verse 5 says, “***For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father?” Or again, “I will be his Father, and he will be my Son***?” (5) The author quoted Psalm 2:7, 2 Sa 7:14, 1 Chro17:13. God did not call any angel ‘his son’. But in the NT God called Jesus, ‘*My Son, whom I love*’, two times; the first was when Jesus was baptized (Mt 3:17) and the second, when Jesus was transfigured on a mountain (Mt 17:5). Second, God let the angels worship Jesus. (6) Verse 6 says, “***And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him***.” This verse is also quoted from Deut 32:43. God let all angels worship Jesus. Do you remember what happens in Revelation? In Revelation 19:10 and 22:9 after John heard and saw the glorious heavenly chorus of praising the Lamb, he wanted to worship the angel. But the angel said to John, “*Don’t do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers and sisters. Worship God!”* In Revelation 5 John saw many angels, numbering ten thousand times upon ten thousand, encircled the throne worshiping the Lamb Jesus, and sang in a loud voice, “*Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain*…” (Rev 5:11) Third, God anointed the Son as King. Verse 8 says, “***But about the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom***.” This verse comes from Psalm 45:6. God anointed Jesus the Son to be the king of righteousness and the king of salvation. Fourth, God established his eternal kingdom through his Son Jesus. Verses 10-12 says, “***He also says, “In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment…But you remain the same, and your years will never end****.*” These verses also are quoted from Psalm 102:25-27. God raised the Son Jesus as the eternal king in his eternal kingdom. As the angel Gabriel said to Mary in Luke 1:33, “*and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”* Because of all these four reasons we are sure of Jesus’ superiority to the angels and the supremacy of Jesus over all things.

Then, what is the meaning of Jesus’ superiority to the angels for us? How can we apply this message for our real life? Jesus’ superiority brings our priority. The word ‘priority’ is defined as someone or something more urgent and important than other things. So, priority is the matter of choice among many things, many tasks, many duties, and many responsibilities. As Christians, and as followers and disciples of Jesus, our priority is the Son Jesus and his kingdom. We choose Jesus first. We have many things to do in this busy world. Still, Jesus asked his disciples to seek his kingdom and his righteousness (Mt 6:33). Let me explain why Jesus should be our first priority based on the seven colors of Jesus according to v. 1-3.

Jesus is heir of all things. According to John and Paul, through faith in Jesus we become children of God, heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ Jesus. (Jn 1:12, Ro 8:17) We inherit the kingdom of God as heirs of God even though we did not do much for it. What a blessing and privilege we have when we inherit eternal life in God’s kingdom! Jesus is the Creator of all things. As Colossians says, all things including our lives, were created through him and for him. (Col 3:16) Through the Son Jesus, we came to know the origin of our lives, the destiny of our lives, and the purpose of our lives. We came from him, go back to him, and live for his glory. Amen!

Jesus the Son is the radiance of God’s glory and exact image of God. This means that God gave us a goal to grow into the image of Jesus. Our spiritual goal is to imitate the image of Jesus and follow his example. We want to grow as humble as Jesus, as kind as Jesus, as compassionate and patient as Jesus, as obedient as Jesus. Jesus is our goal and example. Jesus sustains everything in our lives. By his powerful words he restores creation order and revives lives. He makes all things good and beautiful. Jesus the Son also leads us to repent for our salvation. His blood has power to cleanse all our sins and lead us into his righteousness. By his blood we can be purified and by the power of his blood we can overcome temptation. Lastly, Jesus assures our hope of eternal life in his kingdom by sitting at the right hand of God. As Jesus said, we also will live. Jesus said, “*Because I live, you also will live.*” (Jn 14:19)

When we think of Jesus, the Son, what else do we need more for our happiness and salvation, and what is more urgent and important things to do than for him? Jesus is all things for us and everything to us. Jesus is superior to all things, and he is our first priority. We have many things to do daily. We have many things to worry about and carry out. But, there is nothing and no one who is more urgent and important than Jesus. We have to make a choice for daily walk with Jesus through regular prayer, quiet time, Bible study, and house worship. We make a decision of faith to grow in his divine image and imitate his life as his disciples.

For the main topic for the coming World Mission Report in Korea 2021 is learning Jesus Christ based on the book of Philippians. Paul urged the believers to have the same mindset of Christ, which is his humility and obedience. Having priority for Jesus means accepting his Lordship over our lives. We consider the way of Jesus better than ours. We accept that God’s way is higher than our ways and God’s thought is much wiser than ours. But we sometimes refuse to accept it. I am not exceptional. But Jesus said, ‘If anyone who comes after me must deny himself and take his cross and follow me daily.” Following Jesus is denying myself and accepting his word. As Paul said, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me…” (Gal 2:20) Crucifying my passion and desire to the cross and let Christ live in me as a king. This is to accept his superiority to ourselves and to practice our priority for Jesus. Let us put Jesus and his kingdom over all things! Let us surrender all to Jesus and follow him daily! Praise the name of Jesus! Amen.