

# CHAPTER 1

In this chapter we have a twofold comparison stated:

- I.** Between the evangelical and legal dispensation; and the excellency of the gospel above that of the law is asserted and proved (v. 1-3).
- II.** Between the glory of Christ and that of the highest creatures, the angels; where the pre-eminence is justly given to the Lord Jesus Christ, and clearly demonstrated to belong to him (v. 4 to the end).

## HEBREWS 1:1-3

### LAW AND GOSPEL COMPARED

Here the apostle begins with a general declaration of the excellency of the gospel dispensation above that of the law, which he demonstrates from the different way and manner of God's communicating himself and his mind and will to men in the one and in the other: both these dispensations were of God, and both of them very good, but there is a great difference in the way of their coming from God. Observe,

**I.** The way wherein God communicated himself and his will to men under the Old Testament. We have here an account,

**1.** Of the persons by whom God delivered his mind under the Old Testament; they were *the prophets*, that is, persons chosen of God, and qualified by him, for that office of revealing the will of God to men. No man takes this honour to himself, unless called; and whoever are called of God are qualified by him.

**2.** The persons to whom God spoke by the prophets: *To the fathers*, to all the Old-Testament saints who were under that dispensation. God favoured and honoured them with much clearer light than that of nature, under which the rest of the world were left.

**3.** The order in which God spoke to men in those times that went before the gospel, those past times: he spoke to his ancient people *at sundry times and in divers manners*.

**(1.)** *At sundry times, or by several parts*, as the word signifies, which may refer either to the several ages of the Old-Testament dispensation — the patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the prophetic; or to the several gradual openings of his mind concerning the Redeemer: to Adam, that the Messiah should come of the seed of the woman, — to Abraham, that he should spring from his loins, — to Jacob, that he should be of the tribe of Judah, — to David, that he should be of his house, — to Micah, that he should be born at Bethlehem, — to Isaiah, that he should be born of a virgin.

**(2.)** *In divers manners*, according to the different ways in which God though fit to communicate his mind to his prophets; sometimes by the *illapses* of his Spirit, sometimes by *dreams*, sometimes by visions, sometimes by an audible voice, sometimes by legible characters under his own hand, as when he wrote the ten commandments on tables of stone. Of some of these different ways God himself gave an account in <sup>(CHIZ)</sup> Numbers 12:6-8, *If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision, and will speak to him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses: with him I will speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches.*

**II.** God's method of communicating his mind and will under the New-Testament dispensation, these last days as they are called, that is, either towards the end of the world, or the end of the Jewish state. The times of the gospel are the last times, the gospel revelation is the last we are to expect from God. There was first the natural revelation; then the patriarchal, by dreams, visions, and voices; then the Mosaic, in the law given forth and written down; then the prophetic, in explaining the law, and giving clearer discoveries of Christ: but now we must expect no new revelation, but only more of the Spirit of Christ to help us better to understand what is already revealed. Now the excellency of the gospel revelation above the former consists in two things: —

**1.** It is the final, the finishing revelation, given forth in the last days of divine revelation, to which nothing is to be added, but the canon of scripture is to be settled and sealed: so that now the minds of men are no longer kept in suspense by the expectation of new discoveries, but they

rejoice in a complete revelation of the will of God, both preceptive and providential, so far as is necessary for them to know in order to their direction and comfort. For the gospel includes a discovery of the great events that shall befall the church of God to the end of the world.

**2.** It is a revelation which God has made by his Son, the most excellent messenger that was ever sent into the world, far superior to all the ancient patriarchs and prophets, by whom God communicated his will to his people in former times. And here we have an excellent account of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**(1.)** The glory of his office, and that in three respects: —

**[1.]** God hath appointed him to be heir of all things. As God, he was equal to the Father; but, as God-man and Mediator, he was appointed by the Father to be the heir of all things, the sovereign Lord of all, the absolute disposer, director, and governor of all persons and of all things, <sup><MR6></sup>Psalm 2:6, 7. *All power in heaven and earth is given to him; all judgment is committed to him,* <sup><MR8></sup>Matthew 28:18; <sup><MR2></sup>John 5:22.

**[2.]** By him God made the worlds, both visible and invisible, the heavens and the earth; not as an instrumental cause, but as his essential word and wisdom. By him he made the old creation, by him he makes the new creature, and by him he rules and governs both.

**[3.]** He upholds all things by the word of his power: he keeps the world from dissolving. *By him all things consist.* The weight of the whole creation is laid upon Christ: he supports the whole and all the parts. When, upon the apostasy, the world was breaking to pieces under the wrath and curse of God, the Son of God, undertaking the work of redemption, bound it up again, and established it by his almighty power and goodness. None of the ancient prophets sustained such an office as this, none was sufficient for it.

**(2.)** Hence the apostle passes to the glory of the person of Christ, who was able to execute such an office: *He was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person,* v. 3. This is a high and lofty description of the glorious Redeemer, this is an account of his personal excellency.

**[1.]** He is, in person, the Son of God, the only-begotten Son of God, and as such he must have the same nature. This personal distinction always

supposes one and the same nature. Every son of man is man; were not the nature the same, the generation would be monstrous.

[2.] The person of the Son is the glory of the Father, shining forth with a truly divine splendour. As the beams are effulgent emanations of the sun, the father and fountain of light, Jesus Christ in his person is God manifest in the flesh, he is light of light, the true Shechinah.

[3.] The person of the Son is the true image and character of the person of the Father; being of the same nature, he must bear the same image and likeness. In beholding the power, wisdom, and goodness, of the Lord Jesus Christ, we behold the power, wisdom, and goodness, of the Father; for he hath the nature and perfections of God in him. *He that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father*; that is, he hath seen the same Being. He that hath known the Son hath known the Father, ~~John~~ John 14:7-9. For the Son is in the Father, and the Father in the Son; the personal distinction is no other than will consist with essential union. This is the glory of the person of Christ; the fulness of the Godhead dwells, not typically, but really, in him.

(3.) From the glory of the person of Christ he proceeds to mention the glory of his grace; his condescension itself was truly glorious. The sufferings of Christ had this great honour in them, to be a full satisfaction for the sins of his people: *By himself he purged away our sins*, that is, by the proper innate merit of his death and bloodshed, by their infinite intrinsic value; as they were the sufferings of himself, he has made atonement for sin. Himself, the glory of his person and nature, gave to his sufferings such merit as was a sufficient reparation of honour to God, who had suffered an infinite injury and affront by the sins of men.

(4.) From the glory of his sufferings we are at length led to consider the glory of his exaltation: *When by himself he had purged away our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*, at his Father's right hand. As Mediator and Redeemer, he is invested with the highest honour, authority, and activity, for the good of his people; the Father now does all things by him, and receives all the services of his people from him. Having assumed our nature, and suffered in it on earth, he has taken it up with him to heaven, and there it has the high honour to be next to God, and this was the reward of his humiliation.

Now it was by no less a person than this that God in these last days spoke to men; and, since the dignity of the messenger gives authority and

excellency to the message, the dispensations of the gospel must therefore exceed, very far exceed, the dispensation of the law.

## HEBREWS 1:4-14

### THE DIGNITY OF CHRIST

The apostle, having proved the pre-eminence of the gospel above the law from the pre-eminence of the Lord Jesus Christ above the prophets, now proceeds to show that he is much superior not only to the prophets, but to the angels themselves. In this he obviates an objection that the Jewish zealots would be ready to make, that the law was not only delivered by men, *but ordained by angels* (~~see~~ Galatians 3:19), who attended at the giving forth of the law, the hosts of heaven being drawn forth to attend the Lord Jehovah on that awful occasion. Now the angels are very glorious beings, far more glorious and excellent than men; the scripture always represents them as the most excellent of all creatures, and we know of no being but God himself that is higher than the angels; and therefore that law that was ordained by angels ought to be held in great esteem. To take off the force of this argument, the penman of this epistle proceeds to state the comparison between Jesus Christ and the holy angels, both in nature and office, and to prove that Christ is vastly superior to the angels themselves: *Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.* Here observe,

**I.** The superior nature of Christ is proved from his superior name. The scripture does not give high and glorious titles without a real foundation and reason in nature; nor would such great things have been said of our Lord Jesus Christ if he had not been as great and excellent as those words import. When it is said that Christ was made so much better than the angels, we are not to imagine that he was a mere creature, as the angels are; the word *genomenos*, when joined with an adjective, is nowhere to be rendered *created*, and here may very well be read, *being more excellent*, as the Syriac version hath it. We read *ginesthe ho Theos alethes* — *let God be true*, not made so, but acknowledged to be so.

**II.** The superiority of the name and nature of Christ above the angels is declared in the holy scriptures, and to be deduced thence. We should have

known little or nothing either of Christ or of the angels, without the scriptures; and we must therefore be determined by them in our conceptions of the one and the other. Now here are several passages of scripture cited, in which those things are said of Christ that were never said of the angels.

**1.** It was said of Christ, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee* (~~107~~Psalm 2:7), which may refer to his eternal generation, or to his resurrection, or to his solemn inauguration into his glorious kingdom at his ascension and session at the right hand of the Father. Now this was never said concerning the angels, and therefore by inheritance he has a more excellent nature and name than they.

**2.** It was said concerning Christ, but never concerning the angels, *I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son*; taken from ~~107~~2 Samuel 7:14. Not only, “I am his Father, and he is my Son, by nature and eternal promanation;” but, “I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son, by wonderful conception, and this his son-ship shall be the fountain and foundation of every gracious relation between me and fallen man.”

**3.** It is said of Christ, *When God bringeth his First-begotten into the world, let all the angels of God worship him*; that is, when he is brought into this lower world, at his nativity, let the angels attend and honour him; or when he is brought into the world above, at his ascension, to enter upon his mediatorial kingdom, or when he shall bring him again into the world, to judge the world, then let the highest creatures worship him. God will not suffer an angel to continue in heaven who will not be in subjection to Christ, and pay adoration to him; and he will at last make the fallen angels and wicked men to confess his divine power and authority and to fall before him. Those who would not have him to reign must then be brought forth and slain before him. The proof of this is taken out of ~~107~~Psalm 97:7, *Worship him, all you gods*, that is, “All you that are superior to men, own yourselves to be inferior to Christ in nature and power.”

**4.** God has said concerning Christ, *Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever*, etc., v. 8-12. But of the angels he has only said that *he hath made them spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire*, v. 7. Now, upon comparing what he here says of the angels with what he says to Christ, the vast inferiority of the angels to Christ will plainly appear.

(1.) What does God say here of the angels? *He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.* This we have in ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 104:4, where it seems to be more immediately spoken of the winds and lightning, but is here applied to the angels, whose agency the divine Providences makes use of in the winds, and in thunder and lightnings. Observe,

[1.] The office of the angels: they are God's ministers, or *servants, to do his pleasure.* It is the glory of God that he has such servants; it is yet more so that he does not need them.

[2.] How the angels are qualified for this service; he makes them spirits and a flame of fire, that is, he endows them with light and zeal, with activity and ability, readiness and resolution to do his pleasure: they are no more than what God has made them to be, and they are servants to the Son as well as to the Father. But observe,

(2.) How much greater things are said of Christ by the Father. Here two passages of scripture are quoted.

[1.] One of these is out of ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 45:6, 7, where God declares of Christ, *First,* His true and real divinity, and that with much pleasure and affection, not grudging him that glory: *Thy throne, O God.* Here one person calls another person God, *O God.* And, if God the Father declares him to be so, he must be really and truly so; for God calls persons and things as they are. And now let who will deny him to be essentially God at their peril, but let us own and honour him as God; for, if he had not been God, he had never been fit to have done the Mediator's work nor to have worn the Mediator's crown. *Secondly,* God declares his dignity and dominion, as having a throne, a kingdom, and a sceptre of that kingdom. He has all right, rule, authority, and power, both as the God of nature, grace, and glory, and as Mediator; and so he is fully adequate to all the intents and purposes of his mediatorial kingdom. *Thirdly,* God declares the eternal duration of the dominion and dignity of Christ, founded upon the divinity of his person: *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,* from everlasting to everlasting, through all the ages of time, maugre all the attempts of earth and hell to undermine and overthrow it, and through all the endless ages of eternity, when time shall be no more. This distinguishes Christ's throne from all earthly thrones, which are tottering, and will at length tumble down; but the throne of Christ shall be as the days of heaven. *Fourthly,* God declares of Christ the perfect equity of his administration, and of the execution of his power, through all the parts of his government: *A sceptre of*

*righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom*, v. 8. He came righteously to the sceptre, and he uses it in perfect righteousness; the righteousness of his government proceeds from the righteousness of his person, from an essential eternal love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity, not merely from considerations of prudence or interest, but from an inward and immovable principle: *Thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity*, v. 9. Christ came to fulfil all righteousness, to bring in an everlasting righteousness; and he was righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works. He has recommended righteousness to men, and restored it among them, as a most excellent and amiable thing. He came to finish transgression, and to make an end of sin as a hateful as well as hurtful thing. *Fifthly*, God declares of Christ how he was qualified for the office of Mediator, and how he was installed and confirmed in it (v. 9): *Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows*.

- 1.** Christ has the name Messiah from his being anointed. God's anointing of Christ signifies both his qualifying him for the office of the Mediator with the Holy Spirit and all his graces, and likewise his inauguration of him into the office, as prophets, priests, and kings, were by anointing. *God, even thy God*, imports the confirmation of Christ in the office of Mediator by the covenant of redemption and peace, that was between the Father and the Son. God is the God of Christ, as Christ is man and Mediator.
- 2.** This anointing of Christ was *with the oil of gladness*, which signifies both the gladness and cheerfulness with which Christ undertook and went through the office of Mediator (finding himself so absolutely sufficient for it), and also that joy which was set before him as the reward of his service and sufferings, that crown of glory and gladness which he should wear for ever after the suffering of death.
- 3.** This anointing of Christ was above the anointing of his fellows: *God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows*. Who are Christ's fellows? Has he any equals? Not as God, except the Father and Spirit, but these are not here meant. As man, however, he has his fellows, and as an anointed person; but his unction is beyond all theirs.



(1.) Above the angels, who may be said to be his fellows, as they are the sons of God by creation, and God's messengers, whom he employs in his service.

(2.) Above all prophets, priests, and kings, that ever were anointed with oil, to be employed in the service of God on earth.

(3.) Above all the saints, who are his brethren, children of the same father, as he was a partaker with them of flesh and blood.

(4.) Above all those who were related to him as man, above all the house of David, all the tribe of Judah, all his brethren and kinsmen in the flesh. All God's other anointed ones had only the Spirit in a certain measure; Christ had the Spirit above measure, without any limitation. None therefore goes through his work as Christ did, none takes so much pleasure in it as Christ does; for he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.

[2.] The other passage of scripture in which is the superior excellence of Christ to the angels is taken out of <sup>4925</sup>Psalm 102:25-27, and is recited in v. 10-12, where the omnipotence of the Lord Jesus Christ is declared as it appears both in creating the world and in changing it.

*First, In creating the world (v. 10): And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands.* The Lord Christ had the original right to govern the world, because he made the world in the beginning. His right, as Mediator, was by commission from the Father. His right, as God with the Father, was absolute, resulting from his creating power. This power he had before the beginning of the world, and he exerted it in giving a beginning and being to the world. He must therefore be no part of the world himself, for then he must give himself a beginning. He was *pro panton* — *before all things*, and *by him all things consist*, <sup>5017</sup>Colossians 1:17. He was not only above all things in condition, but before all things in existence; and therefore must be God, and self-existent. He laid the foundations of the earth, did not only introduce new forms into pre-existent matter, but made out of nothing the foundations of the earth, the *primordia rerum* — *the first principles of things*; he not only founded the earth, but the heavens too are the work of his hands, both the habitation and the inhabitants, the hosts of heaven, the angels themselves; and therefore he must needs be infinitely superior to them.

*Secondly*, In changing the world that he has made; and here the mutability of this world is brought in to illustrate the immutability of Christ. Observe,

**1.** This world is mutable, all created nature is so; this world has passed through many changes, and shall pass through more; all these changes are by the permission and under the direction of Christ, who made the world (v. 11, 12): *They shall perish, they shall all wax old as doth a garment; as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed.* This our visible world (both the earth and visible heavens) is growing old. Not only men and beasts and trees grow old, but this world itself grows old, and is hastening to its dissolution; it changes like a garment, has lost much of its beauty and strength; it grew old betimes on the first apostasy, and it has been waxing older and growing weaker ever since; it bears the symptoms of a dying world. But then its dissolution will not be its utter destruction, but its change. Christ will fold up this world as a garment not to be abused any longer, not to be any longer so used as it has been. Let us not then set our hearts upon that which is not what we take it to be, and will not be what it now is. Sin has made a great change in the world for the worse, and Christ will make a great change in it for the better. *We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.* Let the consideration of this wean us from the present world, and make us watchful, diligent, and desirous of that better world, and let us wait on Christ to change us into a meetness for that new world that is approaching; we cannot enter into it till we be new creatures.

**2.** Christ is immutable. Thus the Father testifies of him, *Thou remainest, thy years shall not fail.* Christ is the same in himself, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, and the same to his people in all the changes of time. This may well support all who have an interest in Christ under all the changes they meet with in the world, and under all they feel in themselves. Christ is immutable and immortal: his years shall not fail. This may comfort us under all decays of nature that we may observe in ourselves or in our friends, though our flesh and heart fail and our days are hastening to an end. Christ lives to take care of us while we live, and of ours when we are gone, and this should quicken us all to make our interest in him clear and sure, that our spiritual and eternal life may be hid with Christ in God.

**III.** The superiority of Christ to the angels appears in this that God never said to the angels what he has said to Christ, v. 13, 14.

**1.** What has God said to Christ? He has said, “*Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thy enemies thy footstool,* <sup><BIB></sup>Psalm 110:1. Receive thou glory, dominion, and rest; and remain in the administration of thy mediatorial kingdom until all thy enemies shall either be made thy friends by conversion or thy footstool.” Note,

**(1.)** Christ Jesus has his enemies (would one think it?), enemies even among men — enemies to his sovereignty, to his cause, to his people; such as will not have him to reign over them. Let us not think it strange then if we have our enemies. Christ never did any thing to make men his enemies; he has done a great deal to make them all his friends and his Father's friends, and yet he has his enemies.

**(2.)** All the enemies of Christ shall be made his footstool, either by humble submission and entire subjection to his will casting themselves down at his feet, or by utter destruction; he shall trample upon those who continue obstinate, and shall trample over them.

**(3.)** God the Father has undertaken for this, and he will see it done, yea, he will himself do it; and, though it be not done presently, it shall certainly be done, and Christ waits for it,; and so must Christians wait till God has wrought all their works in them, for them, and by them.

**(4.)** Christ shall go on to rule and reign till this be done; he shall not leave any of his great designs unfinished, he shall go on conquering and to conquer. And it becomes his people to go on in their duty, being what he would have them to be, doing what he would have them to do, avoiding what he would have them to avoid, bearing what he would have them to bear, till he make them conquerors and more than conquerors over all their spiritual enemies.

**2.** What has God said to the angels? He never said to them, as he said to Christ, *Sit you at my right hand;* but he has said of them here that *they are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation.* Note,

**(1.)** What the angels are as to their nature: they are spirits, without bodies or inclination to bodies, and yet they can assume bodies, and appear in them, when God pleases. They are spirits, incorporeal, intelligent, active, substances; they excel in wisdom and strength.

(2.) What the angels are as to their office: they are ministering spirits. Christ, as Mediator, is the great minister of God in the great work of redemption. The Holy Spirit is the great minister of God and Christ in the application of this redemption. Angels are ministering spirits under the blessed Trinity, to execute the divine will and pleasure; they are the ministers of divine Providence.

(3.) The angels are sent forth for this end — to minister to those who shall be the heirs of salvation. Here observe,

[1.] The description given of the saints — they are *heirs of salvation*; at present they are under age, heirs, not inheritors. They are heirs because they are children of God; *if children, then heirs*. Let us make sure that we are children by adoption and regeneration, having made a covenant-resignation of ourselves to God, and walking before him in a gospel-conversation, and then we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

[2.] The dignity and privilege of the saints — the angels are sent forth to minister for them. Thus they have done in attending and acting at the giving forth of the law, in fighting the battles of the saints, in destroying their enemies. They still minister for them in opposing the malice and power of evil spirits, in protecting and keeping their bodies, pitching their tents about theirs, instructing, quickening, and comforting their souls under Christ and the Holy Ghost; and thus they shall do in gathering all the saints together at the last day. Bless God for the ministration of angels, keep in God's way, and take the comfort of this promise, that he will *give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your feet against a stone,* <sup><B></sup>Psalm 91:11, 12.